

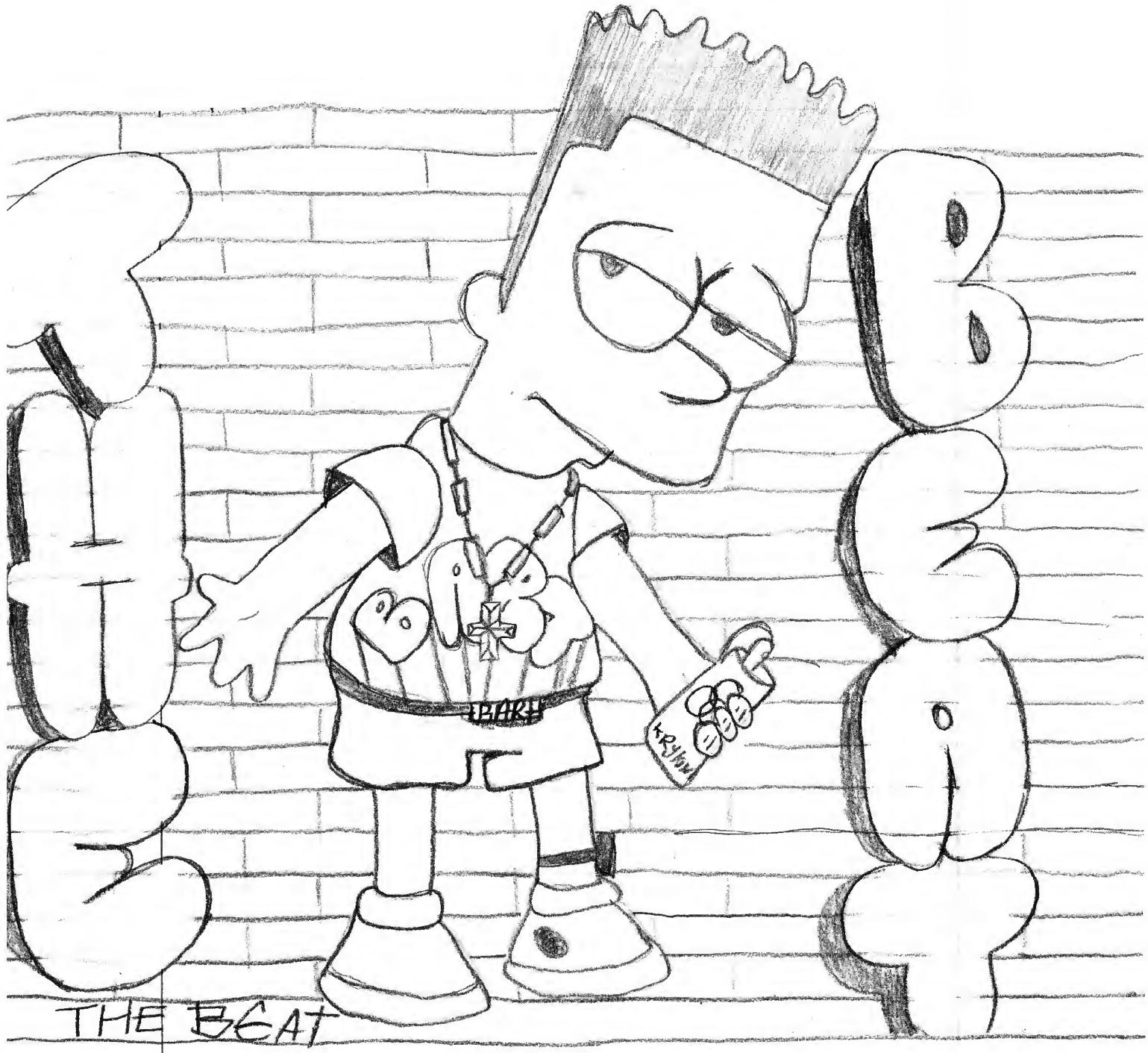
The Beat Within

THE BEAT WITHIN • A WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF WRITING AND ART FROM THE INSIDE • VOLUME 13.47



I miss the outs. I love being out with my family and friends. I love getting up when I want. I love to eat when I eat at my own time. I love to take my time in the shower. I love to get up and walk when I want. I love wearing clean and nice clothes. I love the outs!

read the rest of Ghost's POW on page 5



THE BEAT

We would like to welcome y'all back to another stellar issue of **The Beat Within**. Another busy week over here at the office as we pummeled through all these pile of papers, and turned in our edits on time. Three issues in one week pushing real tough. 13.46, 13.47, and once this editorial note is done, 13.48. Hitting you readers hard so we can do some catching up and end our year on the positive. We must say, it's a very difficult task for many of us as we had the Thanksgiving holidays, which equaled short week, but screw all the excuses, we getting the job done and thus far our printers are loaded with paper, their working and ready to print!

Yesterday **The Beat Within** was on the local NBC affiliate, "The Six O'clock News." David I., Allan M., Joanne, and this editor, young Oma, were on San Jose's NBC channel 3 putting it down for **The Beat**! A couple of weeks ago a couple guys from NBC, reporter Damian Trujillo and his cameraman came to the office to do a story on us. (Thank you Carla Ramm for sharing **The Beat** with Damian.) He interviewed Dave and he told him how the program got started. And for those of you who don't know the history of the Beat, it originally got started back in 1996 in San Francisco's Juvenile Hall.

Everything happened right after 2Pac died – as most of you know, the first Beat issue was on his death. Dave was social worker before he created **The Beat**, working as a youth advocate, so he was already going into juvenile halls, and established a named for himself in the San Francisco community. A life long youth advocate, Dave, since 1996 has been giving his all to **The Beat Within**, from the weekly workshops to the non-stop process every single week of putting out **The Beat Within** weekly.

So when NBC News came thru, Dave gave them the run down, then it went to our one and only Allan Martinez, who does all the Spanish transcribing. Allan told his story and his involvement with **The Beat**. Allan met Dave in one of the workshop's at YGC at a time when Allan was being a little bad ass - going in and out of Juvenile hall more than 15 times. He told him what the program meant and obviously it meant something for him to stick around for so long. Going on 30 years, just kidding.

Then one of our very good interns got interview and she briefly told them what the program meant to her. Then I, Omar, went, and told them what I was about and how I got involved with the program. My involvement came back in 2002. I think I was in San Mateo County's Juvenile Hall, called Hillcrest. I was in there for a gang of shhh that I didn't even do, and some things I did do.

When I got my papers with my charges on it I had like four different cases and at least five to six felonies that they wanted to charge me with. They made me look and feel lightweight like a legitimate criminal.

Well anyways I fought the charges and of course a lot of them did get dropped. I didn't have to go to the "Y," but I still plead guilty to a few charges including a felony. In my time in the hall I was attending **Beat Within** workshops and didn't think anything special of them at first. But I was intrigued by the way the facilitators would come in and show mad love and respect.

They weren't trying to change who I was, they weren't judging me by the color of my skin, the fact that I was gang banging, they were just curious to know why I was doing hella negative shhh. Needless to say, my trip in the system went for about fourteen months straight. I went to the ranch and got kicked out, and did the rest of my time in the hall. The Beat people told me when I got out that I could get a job at the Beat and I did. That was in '03, and I have been here ever since.

I have seen my young homies go through the system, I have seen some OG's write to **The Beat**, and I myself got caught up in the system as well. But **The Beat** has been there, not just for me, but for everybody. It's not just a magazine people,

we are real people in this office that go through the same struggle a lot of you go through. I been on the corner, and I've been shot, I've been to jail countless times.

This magazine is strictly for the concerned, the young locked up, and everybody at the next level too. It's also for all those people in suburbs, that don't know about any kind of struggle, to take a look and see if they can stand a second in our shoes. Or take a glimpse at us and see that we're people just like everybody else.

We have a lot of OG's, and writers writing from all over the USA right now, as you know that's our BWO (Beat Without) section of the magazine. We have gotten well over six hundred people writing to us because they are trying to reach to y'all in juvenile hall before they bump into you at the next level of the criminal justice system. And with that said, that's why we are coming out with a special Beat issue of only BWO writers. It's going to be jam-packed with stories from those who once were sitting in your seat in Juvenile Hall and now find themselves locked down for the rest of their lives and are never gonna get a chance to come home.

We can't wait to put this one of a kind issue out of strictly BWO writers, and only include their stories, their poems, their pain, to help us understand and learn from their choices. This isn't HBO folks this is real life, if you don't want to listen to my advice, or our advice, just listen to these brave men really tell you how it is. The real story not no glamorous story that some doped up O.G. might have told ya (no disrespect). But this issue is dedicated for everyone locked down! This Beat is here for y'all, we are here for the streets, we are not gonna be ignored! One love!

Before we close the editorial note, here are the topics that were addressed prior to writing that is featured in this issue. The first topic, "Which is easier, life on the outs or life in here?" – We know from what you write each week that your lives can be very hard. You may not have a parent providing for you at home. Your homies may convince you to do things that get you in trouble. You may be addicted to alcohol or drugs. You may already be responsible for bringing a new life into the world. But we also read how much you hate being here, being told what to do and when to do it, having to wear someone else's clothes and be around people you might not choose to be around if you had a choice. What we want to know is which is easier (or harder), being out there or being in here? Tell us all the things that make life on the outs harder or easier than being locked up, and then tell us all the things that make life in the hall harder or easier than being free.

Second topic, "Running" – At different times in our lives, all of us want to get up and run... Run from a relationship that isn't working; run from a group home we hate; run from the hall or the Ranch; run from a scheduled meeting with a PO, a lawyer or a judge; run from our problems. The first question we have is: why run when you can't hide (since the thing we're running from will still be there when we stop running)? Tell us a story about running from a person or a place or a problem. What did you run from? How did running help or hurt you? As you get older, are your ideas about running changing in any way?

Third topic, "Swallowing your pride" – Have you ever had to swallow your pride and do or say something you felt you had to do or say, even though you didn't want to? What was the situation, and why did you feel that you had to do what you did rather than what you wanted to do?

Lastly, "Election 2008" – Whether Barack Obama wins the presidency or not (and as we write this, it appears that he will), in what way does this election make you a part of history, and what does it mean to you? How has this election between Obama and McCain changed you or your view of the community or country, and your place in it. In what ways have you changed? Whoever wins this election, what do you hope will change about you or about the country?

TABLE o f C O N T E N T S

THEBEATWITHIN.ORG VOLUME 13.47

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

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Writers: Thanks to all the participants in our workshops in the San Francisco, Maricopa County Arizona, Santa Clara, San Mateo, Alameda, Bernalillo County New Mexico, Santa Cruz and Marin County Juvenile Halls. If you have any questions or comments about The Beat Within, or if you would like to become a subscriber, contact us at: 275 Ninth St. SFCA. 94103 or call (415) 503-4170 or check us out at:

www.thebeatwithin.org

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Pieces Of The Week

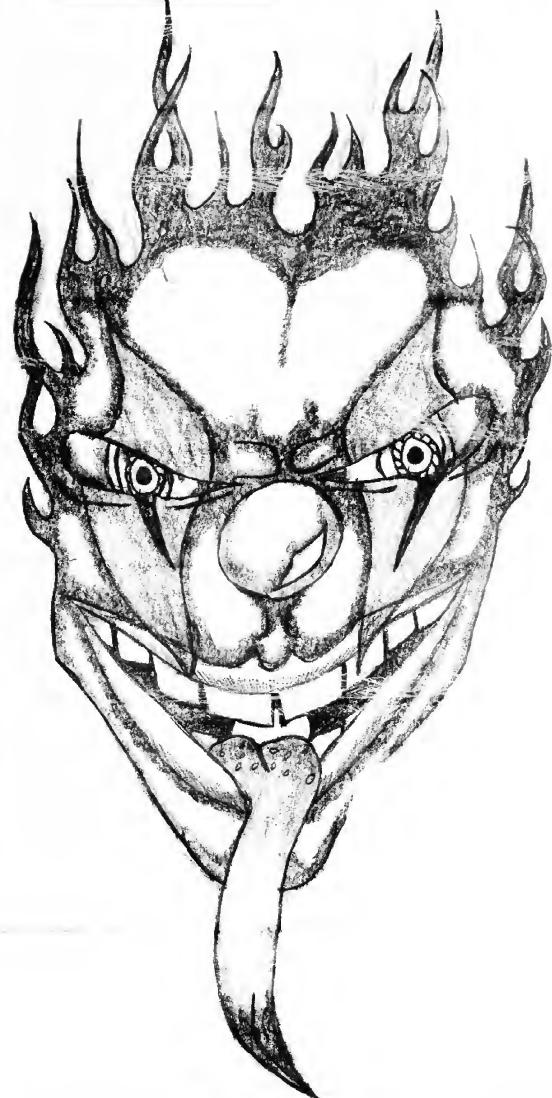
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Life and Thankfulness

I love life and I'm thankful for waking up to pray. Still moving, waking up, just as I laid my head. Breathing, smiling, and walking. Just to see the same people is a ray of life.

I enjoy life as well, and whatever happens, happens for a reason. So I really enjoy life.

Someone dies every day as of every second, someone is born. So to live is to be joyful.

If I could die and come back I would be a lion. But if I could die and meet somebody, it would be 2Pac and Malcolm X to ask what they were thankful for, to see if they were loving life.

-Michael

From The Beat: Michael, your enthusiasm for life and those around you is encouraging. We're curious what makes you want to come back as a lion. It would definitely be interesting to see if 2Pac and Malcolm X were enjoying life before it was taken from them. Keep loving life.

I Survived

The first thing that I am thankful for is to have the prettiest young girl come into my life, and her name is Stephanie.

The second thing that I am thankful for is to have God wake me up every day, and that the bullet hit me in my leg instead of my head and I survived. And I'm thankful to have a strong brother in my life.

-Stephen

From The Beat: Stephen, we're glad you're safe. Do you live life differently since being shot? Are you more grateful for things than you were before?

Violence

I was in my room one day
I heard that my man got killed
I was mad because I could not tell him that I love him.
That was my best friend and I will still keep him with me all the time.

-D-Upt

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear about the loss of your friend, and that you couldn't tell him how you felt. We're sure he already knew how much you cared about him. How do we stop the cycle of violence that claims so many lives, so young people won't keep losing friends?

As the Seasons Change

As the seasons change
Everything don't stay the same
People get shot, stabbed,
And their parents feel the pain.
I don't know why young Americans
Kill to survive
While the president's trying to find
Pieces of the pie
It's hard for a young man
To stay off the street,
Change his life
When he got beef
But when he don't think about it,
It's all about the Honeys
Having sex with no money
As the seasons change,
Do the world get worse
Or do it get better?
I don't know nothing about the weather.

-Frank

From The Beat: Frank, we loved this poem. The rhymes are powerful and the piece flows well. You paint a picture of what people go through and give us some interesting food for thought. Thank you for your thoughtful contributions.

Life is Short

Life is short so enjoy what's left
I'm going to live until my last breath
Walkin' on earth is really a pleasure
It's tough right now, I wish it was better
Even though we have a black president
I wonder will he lower the prices for rent
Change we can is what he said,
But where I'm from change can announce you're dead
I never want to die but there's no telling when
My life is fun I wish I could live it again
But when will I go is the big question
I'm not sure about god so I have no blessing
I don't want to die like Backyard on Saturday night
But until that day I'm going to live my life.

-Lb

From The Beat: Once again you use a simple, smooth rhythm to say a lot with your rhymes. You are an incredible writer! You're right, as we get excited about Obama's election, it's important to remember the immediate issues that many people face, like rising rent costs. We're glad you're committed to living life even in the face of hard times. Stay up.

Ready to Make a Change

Where I live at there is a lot of violence.
I am messed up because I am not going home.
I want to be home with my family.
I am trying to eat good.
I want to thank God for seeing another day.
I am tired of waking up at 6:30 in the morning.
I am ready to make a change.
I want to thank God for my mother bringing me in this world.
Me and my friends are really close. We go to church and party.
I am detained at Oak Hill and I have a good advocate at Oak Hill.
She is a nice lady. I love our staff Ms. Malone.
She gives me a lot of courage and hope.
I don't like violence.
I always remember when my man got shot.
I was shocked because I never seen nobody get killed.
That hurts when someone you are close to gets hurt.

-Patrick

From The Beat: Patrick, it's clear you have a lot on your mind. Keep writing, it can help you make sense of things. It sounds like some of the violence you've seen has stuck with you and affected you, and it sounds like being away from your family is affecting you too. But you also talk about some positive people you've met during your time at Oak Hill. How can you take the courage and hope you've gained to deal with your time away? How can you deal with the loss of your friend and work to avoid violence in the future?

There for Me

One thing I want to say thank you for is my Grandma. I love her, she's always there for me no matter what I did or do. I don't know what I would do without her.

The next thing is life. I'm happy to be Huff and I want to say thank you to the people who made it possible for me.

I want to say thank you to my right hand man Whiteboy for always being there for me and having my back no matter what.

-Huff

From The Beat: Thanks Huff, it sounds like you have some good people close to you. Make sure you tell them how much you appreciate them. One thing you talk about is how your grandma and your right hand man are there for you unconditionally—no matter what. That's a nice feeling to have, but it comes with responsibility too. What can you do to make them proud?

Fly Boy Adventures: Epiphany

Beat, this ya boy Skip, man, reintroducing myself as Fly Boy. Skips Broadcast has been pushed back due to some technical difficulties with soul searchin', you feel me.

But chea, man, I feel big right now, know what I'm talkin' 'bout? Not like big in the sense of weight, not like gaining weight or nothin' like that. I mean somethin' like colossal, ya feel me? Even though I'm incarcerated, I feel like once I touch down I'ma have the system and all my haters bowin' at my feet, like, "Hi haters!"

I'ma say one thing — the system got over me. Thy managed to take away my teenage years with my help. But now I'm 18. I'm out this juvey Disneyworld and 'bout to do my thing and stay under the clouds. The only thing that's gon take me away from my fam and loved ones is death itself. I'll be damned if I let another ninja tell me when to piss or eat, ya feel me?

These crackers don't se me, but they hear me. They don't feel me but they fear me, and they fear me because they seen me in here doin' my time without complaint, ya dig? I picked up GED books, passed the tests, enrolled in college, got my license, got a job for when I get out, and I'm goin' home. Not another placement, but home!

I got a little girl and a baby mama and a mother who at my every court date. That's why these crackers fear me. I'm 'bout to succeed and they want me here in holes like this. They see me progressin', and they like, "Uh-oh, one less ninja, one less dollar in my pocket." So I'ma stop payin' these crackers like my Uncle T said.

As far as my haters go, I'm wavin' at you clowns. You could walk around the halls aimin' air guns and be a warrior of windows talkin' 'bout gettin' money of licks and bustin', but chea man, how long can you do all that without dyin' or gettin' caught? Reflect on that!

-Fly Boy (Skip), San Francisco

From The Beat: First, we want to give you a standing ovation for all you have contributed to these workshops, to The Beat, and especially to your own development! Your successes show what is possible when a person wants to make a change, as you do. If we have any negative comment to make at all, Skip, it's that we don't think it does any good to call people by names like "cracker." It doesn't really tell us anything about who you are describing this way. Is it their race (white) that makes them crackers? Or their jobs? Or their way of dealing with you? We think it's better to see people as individuals, and not as categories. Do you disagree with us? But that aside, we are proud of you, and we are so excited for you and your future. We would love for you to write us and tell us how college is, what new doors (of thought as well as accomplishment) it opens for you, what the most serious problems you face and need to overcome, etc. You are a first-rate thinker and teacher, so keep thinking and teaching!

The Outs

Life on the outs is definitely easier than life in here. Before coming in here, I had a life that was pretty stable. I was an excellent student, taking advanced placement classes and receiving an award of achievement for the grading period. Then I ended up here just for hanging around the wrong people at the wrong time.

My life was, generally speaking, easy. My mother tried her best to provide for me, and in return, this is how I repaid her with her work and worries. Although I don't enjoy anything about this place, what I do appreciate is the stability it provides. Without stability, I wouldn't be able to function properly.

I'm still counting the time until I can go home, hopefully soon. Until then, I wait.

-Catherine, San Francisco

From The Beat: You may have disappointed your mother for the time being, but you have a lifetime to make her proud of you, and from what you've written and the way you've written it, we're willing to bet that you will make both her and you proud. Now that you've tasted the consequences of "hanging around the wrong people at the wrong time," will you do anything differently when you're once again breathing free air? Like what?

Night Time in Juvenile Hall

Night time in Juvenile Hall! Night time in the hall is crazy, sometimes they don't cut off the light. All I do is lay back in bed and think about my life. How I ran the streets. And how my momma was out there looking for me at night. How I was out there on the block with my family. Sometimes I sit back in my cell and cry at night, because I feel like I lost my pride. I wish that this was all a dream, but it's not.

All I wake up to is these four walls and the toilet. Sometimes I feel like an animal stuck in his cage, ready to be let free. All I do in my room at night is sit at this small desk and write about my life. I talk to God all night, and I ask is everything goin' to be all right. I woke out and read to let some of the pain out. I look at all my pictures of my family and think about all the fun times we had. People always told me what's done in the dark comes to light. I wish I could hit a button and my life will start all over. I would be a better person.

I try to be strong but it seem like my strongest can only last so long. I get so lonely at night, because I'm used to sleeping with my girl. The bed don't feel right in here...

My brother passed away at night shooting dice. They shot him in his head. My other brother got shot nine times but still survived. I was out there when it happened, but I ducked. I think about that every night, how they took my brother's life. I also think about is I'm going to be a good father to my kid and wife. I got a baby on the way. I don't know what it's going to be, my girl is five months pregnant right now.

But this is what I do at night.

-Charles, Alameda

From The Beat: This beautifully written piece takes us on a trip into your own mind, feeling the night dread creep on us. But what's beautiful is that with all the pain you feel at night, you end on hope — the chance you now have to find your best self, as a father. That "better person" is just around the corner. Keep writing like this, and you may find it.

The World Is Hell

Being in here sucks! I hate it when they tell me when to get up. I hate it when I have to eat breakfast, lunch and dinner at their time. I hate it when they tell us to brush our teeth; I love to do it on my own time. I hate it when we can't relax in the showers, can't even take a five-minute shower. I hate it when we have to buzz out like a helpless dog. I hate it wearing their clothes. The lazy asses don't even wash the clothes right. I hate being here!

I miss the outs. I love being out with my family and friends. I love getting up when I want. I love to eat when I eat at my own time. I love to take my time in the shower. I love to get up and walk when I want. I love wearing clean and nice clothes. I love the outs!

The world isn't fair! Oh well. Everyone is treated different. Never run. Never hide. Always face your problems. There is bad. There is good. The world is meant to be one. We suffer. We fight. We go to war. But in the outs we have our family to guide us like god. In here we barely listen because they ain't our parents. The world is hell. People kill themselves 'cause they're scared to go out. But that's life. We gotta keep pushin', gotta keep tryin'. NEVER give up!

-Ghost, Santa Clara

From The Beat: After reading those wonderful things that freedom provides — from being with loving families to taking long, leisurely showers — how could we agree that the world is hell? Oh, we know there is hell in the world, but by your own descriptions, there is also heaven. Maybe the most important thing you wrote is: "Never give up!" We know that you are capable of living a life that does not include taking orders from strangers or wearing someone else's drawers or racing to finish a five-minute shower. You can find the peace you seek. Others have.

Living Life As A Goon

I'm living my life as a goon, I didn't start at any age either. I been a goon since I came into this world, my mom had a goon mind and my older brothers had goon minds. I was a little kid hearing my Mom and older brothers curse so I started cursing.

I started going outside to find some friends. I found some but after two weeks they told be they can't be friends with me because they mom told them I was a bad kid and not to hang around me, but I really didn't care because they were all different from me anyways. So I didn't have no friends that were like me to hang around with.

I would ask my mom for some money so I could get something to eat from the store but she would only give me one dollar every time I asked. I would go to the store like every day and every time I went I would see my older brothers and all of they friends just standing on the corner right outside the liquor store with gold teeth, hecca tattoos, nice clothes and nice shoes and they would have their pants a little higher from half way down.

I would always buy two packs of ranch sunflower seeds. After I buy the seeds I would go to the steps in front of my house and eat the seeds and watch my brothers and they friends just stand on the corner smoking and playing dice games. I got tired of eating the seeds and watching my brother and they friends so I went into the house.

I would listen to my brother's cds until I got bored so I went into the garage and there was only a weight set and hecca boxes so I started looking through the boxes. I grabbed one box but there was only dvd players and hecca other stuff witch my brothers had stole so I grabbed another box I don't know how but I dropped it and I seen a lot of papers and cds but under the cds I seen something that looked like a handle of a gun so I picked it up and it was a gun. It was all black. I picked up the papers and the cds and put them back into the box and then I ran into the house with the all black gun in my hand.

I went into my room turned the light on and looked at the gun until I heard my brother coming. I lifted my mattress up and put it under the bed and grabbed a book right when my bigger brother walked in and said "What you been up to lil' bra?" I said nothing just reading this dumb book what about you big bra? He said nothing just got into the house. I said ayy big bra why do they call you dre? He said because it's the last part of my name, so I said

can people call me rell since that's the last part of my name? He said yea lil' bra that's a coo nick name but go to bed now rell. I said okay dre.

That night I couldn't stop thinking of the gun. I was only ten years old. Two years past I was only twelve and I had bad friends just like me and they called me rell. I would always carry the gun that I found in my garage everywhere I go. My brother went to jail for getting caught with a gun and had a stolen car. He got out six months later and I asked him if he would buy me some gold teeth. So he did. I had nice clothes, nice shoes, gold teeth, and a gun. I was just like my big brother. The only thing different was he had tattoos and I didn't cause I couldn't find nobody to do them for me.

My brother went back to jail he didn't get out until that next year. When he got out I was thirteen years old and I asked him why do you keep going back to jail? He said because I'm a goon and I'm down for what I do and I'm always ready for whatever. I asked are you ever going to change? He said no, I'm proud of what I do and then I asked am I a goon? He said yeah you a goon it's in our blood.

I ended up going to jail the next month. I got out and went back again the next month. I didn't like the police because they would always take me to jail. I was a goon I was down for what I did and I was never going to change. I hated the police so much I was an outlaw and didn't care about hem. I kept in my mind that I was an outlaw and I was a goon. I keep the gun, I had my gold teeth, and all the nice clothes and shoes. I kept getting locked up back and forth. I kept doing what I been doing and always got locked up. The next year I was fourteen and I was still the same. I am fourteen right now and I still am a goon and I still am a outlaw and I'm still down for what I do and I will never change. I'm just a real goon living the goon life.

-Young Rell, Solano

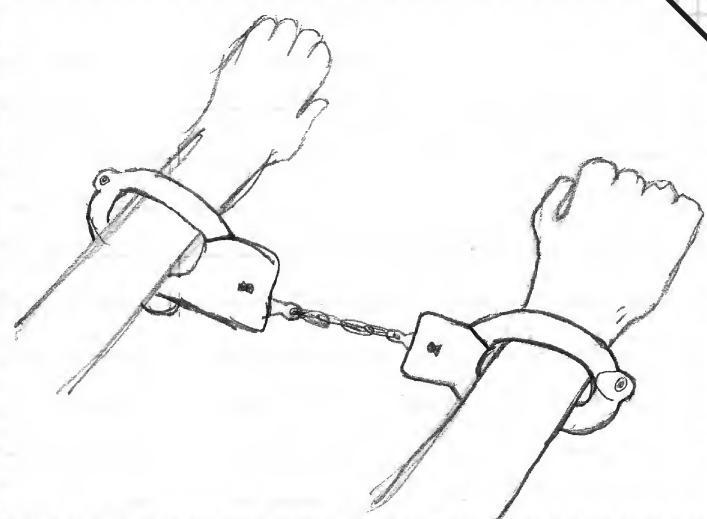
From The Beat: You tell this story well. As a reader we understand that the only choice offered you was this life. As you get older you have more power over what you choose to tell yourself that you are...If you "kept in your mind" that you are a great writer and kept writing no matter what, you'd probably become good at that too. This story has limits, and basically they are death and jail. Your life could become much bigger than this. There are other powerful things, much greater tools and weapons than guns. It depends upon what you don't like about the world, what you want to fight against, or fight for. You could write books for boys just like you who are turned away from certain friends and love their brothers, but don't get good guidance from them. You don't need to blame the police, everything about your life led you to jail—they just gave you the ride. Now it's your chance to become who you can be, this isn't a thug sitcom Rell, it's your life. The world is amazing, let yourself see more than the inside of a cell!

Amilli Remix

Obama Obama Obama
 Obama Obama Obama
 08 to 012
 BLK presidential year
 Obama tougher than Nigerian hair
 Democratic all ova the Republicans very scared,
 we glad dey mad
 we pitch dey watch
 so dey threat to reveal dem
 scope rifles and dem glocks,
 history was yesterday
 11/04/08,
 voting makes a difference,
 Democrats gon run this country
 let them demonstrate!

-Fresh, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We should send this to Lil' Wayne and see if he'll come down to San Jose and record this with you. Awesome!



Wake Up!

Wake up, fight back, open your eyes and see that we are under attack
 Take it for granted and they will take I all right back
 Right back is where we are going, regression to the Dark Age
 Open up our present lives and it's another miserable black page
 Read between the lines and it's another black page
 Prepare for the oncoming storm, the shadows will plague this world for years
 Social apocalypse from messed up politics, prepare to be ruled
 Welcome to the hell you have created, not even your Lord approves
 I hope you are all happy, but I want change or I want out
 The association with this addiction is far too shameful for me to just smile
 Acceptance is castration
 Apathy is too difficult when disgust boils my blood
 Welcome to a world eradicated of love
 Soon I am going to explode
 The cultural divide breeds believers of the lies
 No solution on either side, just waiting for a change of tick
 Chaos, all I see is madness, how the hell could anyone let this shhh happen
 'Cause when it's all messed up, maybe they will realize that they're all stuck
 Soon we're going to crawl back to living in a cave
 Face the consequences because you dug your own grave
 The setbacks and atrocities will be the makers of our age
 The next chapter of our lives is just another black page
 So here I am, creaming, tired and ugly
 Get the hell off me, you can't really touch me
 Wake up, fight back, open your eyes and see that we are under attack
 Take it for granted and they will take it al right back

-Nors, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This poem is profound on different levels. For example, when you write, "We are under attack" we can think of many that are attacking you (us), including an economic system that keeps you at the bottom, a criminal justice system that isn't just, institutional racism, and — worst of all — ourselves! And when you urge your readers to "fight back," we can also think of a long list of things that need to be resisted. What did you have in mind when you wrote this? Who are you under attack from? Who needs to be fought? How do you imagine this fight? How will be it be waged? Who will the fighters be? Who will prevail?

Election 2008

This year's election is very intense. It's like Holyfiled and Ali in the ring together it's a serious showdown.

If I could vote, I would vote for Obama. My vote goes for him because he talks of serious change, not just for blacks, but for everybody. People think that this is really history making, but what w don't know is that there were five other black presidents in our history.

Barack wants better job payments, not using the economic crisis as an excuse. He wants better communities for people of low income I can't name everything, but this election is important to me because our society is going into recession.

-Jelly, San Francisco

From The Beat: Obama not only talks of serious change, he talks in a serious way, as if he's talking to adults. We're more used to our leaders talking down to us, like we're children. We all have very high hopes for a new and different administration under a new and different president. But we are curious about your claim that five other presidents were black. We don't know where that information comes from, but be careful about using information you can't verify as true. Just because you might read something on the Internet doesn't necessarily mean it's true (or false). When you write something like that, it's always a good idea to include the source of the information. (By the way, who are those five other presidents you believe were black?)

Life's Easy But Hard

The life between these walls becomes easy as you get used to the routine. It's an everyday thing. The hard part about being between these walls are controlling your thoughts, missing those who you love and care about, the time you're facing, and having to accept the fact that you've lost your freedom and you're caged up like an animal.

The easy life on the outs is having your parents pay for everything that you want, need, or beg for. But as you grow up, life gets harder. The hard part about life is that you got to struggle to survive. You have to work hard to live good. There's hard decisions that you got to make, such as sacrificing. Our parents sacrifice their time to provide us what we need to survive.

Life's hard, and then you die.

-Saetern, Santa Clara

From The Beat: How are you handling the hard part? How do you control your thoughts? How do you deal with being "caged like an animal?" We changed your last line, as you can see, and we don't think it adds to your thinking. After all, for some people, life's a joy, and then you die. The only part that's true of all of us is that we die. It's what we do until then that counts.

My President Is Black

Oh shhh! Obama really won! It's jus' hella mainly how I'm alive to experience this shhh! Even being in an institution, it's freakin' pandemonium!

I actually FEEL different. McCain somewhere throwin' a hissy fit. If I was out — and I have to be honest, I don't drink — but I'd drink to this. This is just one of them days I look to cherish and reminisce on, regardless of the circumstances.

I'm 18 and I got to vote. I really feel that my vote counted. Whoo hoo! It don't get no betta, feel me.

-Fresh, San Francisco

From The Beat: We share your sense of excitement and achievement — even though we hope your last turns out to be wrong, and it gets even better! Just think, you will be able to tell your children that the first vote you ever cast for president of the United States elected the first Black man in the history of the country! Not a bad beginning for a new voter. Congratulations!

Memory

I have made a few mistakes in my life. But every time I have made a mistake, I have had to pull myself up. There was nobody there to help me up. From age seven I had to do everything on my own, because nobody in my life was trustworthy.

One day this random professional woman came to see me; I told her that the only way I would talk to her was if she played basketball with me. She decided to go ahead and play against me in her high heels and all. We played for about 45 minutes. She made a few baskets but I beat her though. She had spirit though, and took a risk by playing with me. So, even though she lost, I decided to talk to her anyway.

That day I felt a connection to one person more than all the people in the world. After that though, I had more test for this woman to go through before I could trust her. But, she passed them all too. She is the best thing that ever happened to me though. She brought a beautiful spirit into my world, she introduced me to my own sister, who I love now, and I thank her for that.

-Kenny, Fresno

From The Beat: Thank you for sharing with us Kenny. Sometimes it just takes that one connection to make us feel loved and believed in. We hope that you follow in her footsteps and be that person for someone else someday and share that gift with someone else who needs it too.

Family

(Verse 1)

What I have in my heart is the people I love
 Ever since the start, my life became rough
 Struggled since birth when I tried to talk
 Or tried so hard when I tried to walk
 They were always there to show love and care
 With a glowing heart that they struggled to share
 I never took it for granted, but I took advantage
 I hurt them so much when I shook and slanted
 As I'm locked away I think about them better days
 When I was free, I took my soul and I fled away
 I did so much wrong to my mom, but I apologize
 Now I'm really sorry for your breakdown, I wanna die
 I'm sorry for the pain that I caused in your life
 I love you so much, I don't wanna see you cry
 It hurts me dearly inside, now I wanna change
 As I think about that life, it makes me deranged
 Even though I won't be home for a while, Mama
 Just know to always smile through the drama
 (chorus)

Family first, no matter how much it hurts
 No matter what, even if we're cursed
 They'll always have a place in my heart
 Family begins as soon as my life starts
 (Verse 2)

Remember how aggressive I got, T?
 I'm sorry for that 'cause that was not me
 I love you to death as my little brother
 When I'm gone, never believe what Giggles told you
 Even though she was my girl
 I love you more than anyone in this world
 Anyways, what's good L? How you been?
 I will always love you through thick and thin
 Listen to Mom 'cause she's always right
 Don't despise her 'cause she's there in your everyday life
 I want you to know that love Mom for supporting me
 And never took a second to think about aborting me
 Even though life's hard for me, I don't want you to walk
 my path

Think about what I did and the struggles I brought back
 The females that I had were accepted to the game
 But I played them, now I'm neglected by the fame
 Don't follow my path, keep yourself on check
 Be good in life, 'cause you don't know what's next
 (chorus)

Family first, and not matter how much it hurts
 No matter what, even if we're cursed
 They'll always have a place in my heart
 Family begins as soon as my life starts
 (Dedicated to my fam bam... I love you guys)

-Saetern, Santa Clara

From The Beat: The old saying, "We don't know what we have until it's gone" is like a giant exclamation point when you're locked away from your family, that treasure that you allowed to slip from your hands. But you are smart enough and have a heart big enough (yet bruised) to reclaim what you lost, to recognize it's worth more than all the money, drugs, sex and fun you enjoyed while missing the gold in front of you. The tears your mama sheds are the product of undying and unconditional love for you, and no treasure is worth more!

Teenagers want to go to school and be something but those strikes won't let them live right.

Running From John Law

I have been running from the law ever since August of this year.
 Probation's been knocking on my door
 but I have no one to open it while I'm in the back hopping the fence.
 It's like that over and over again.
 Doing drugs, drinking, and even gang banging.
 I got two under covers walking right behind me.
 I see the badge on the side of one.
 So I run.
 I get away,
 but the next day,
 me and my baby mama got into a little fight
 so I walk out the front door and I see ten probation officers out
 at my front yard.
 I realize this isn't the life.
 I don't want to run anymore.

-Nate, Fresno

From The Beat: It's terrible to live a life where you are constantly running, but we're glad you finally realized what was going on in your life. It takes a lot of courage to face what you are running from. Only then can you start the process of re-evaluating your life so you can make it better.

Swallowing My Pride

In this world there are times when I needed to swallow my pride and do what I didn't want to do. When I first met with my PO, I had to talk and treat him with manners and courtesy. Even when he came to see me and started talking shhh or recommended the Ranch for me, I still had to do the same. I've never shown him anger or disrespected him. But still, he's hating on me. One day he'll show me respect like I did to him.

-Dk, San Francisco

From The Beat: This is an excellent example of the kind of situation where swallowing your pride makes completely sense. (And, frankly, we don't believe the writers who claim that they've never had to do it...) Whether your PO ever gives you the respect you've given him or not, we give you our respect for thinking and acting like a mature young man and not a child. This is a good sign for your future, and we appreciate it.

We Should Not Get Strikes

Should teenagers get strikes for small crimes? I think that we teenagers should not be treated as adults yet.

We have enough with being locked up for a long time. Strikes are a very serious situation in your life. When you are a teenager, you don't really think about what you do. Teenagers these days be getting strikes for small crimes like robbery. Murder should be getting strikes because that's one thing you can't bring back... robberies and other small things can be paid and stuff. But small crimes be changing people.

Strikes make people really scared and make them stress and make them want to hurt themselves. It scares a lot of people and ruins their future. People can't get jobs, can't go to college. People under 21 shouldn't be charged for strikes because they are not mature enough and they have a chance to change while they are locked up. Teenagers that have gotten strikes are scared of hanging around their houses and going out to have fun, because they can get locked up for life very young and when they get strikes, they think they can't change.

Then they don't care about their lives and hurt people or kill, because they think that even if they do the right thing, they will try to catch them for something really small, like drugs and be in for a long time. Teenagers want to go to school and be something but those strikes won't let them live right.

-Jesus, Alameda

From The Beat: You should be on the outside, studying law and politics, instead of on the inside stressing over county food! You show great insight into the way hopelessness can creep into life once people think they can't change. But if strikes don't help young people start to care about their lives, then what should replace them?

Man Up

With the turn of the seasons
Time to take care of
business
Change for the best
Forget the rest of all the
things
You thought were right for
you in your life
Look around an' see where
you are
Nowhere you want to be
This is the time in life
Take advantage of this time
It was given to us to climb
Above all the crime
You may hate the way you
crawl
Every day to get on your feet
But be thankful for this
Pain and suffering you call
your own
When really you share it
with your home
The actions you take just
don't affect your fate
Your family loses you as
you fade away
Just because you shied
away
Forget the punks you call
your friends
Being locked away, they
forgot about you
Don't be a fool just to be
cool
Take care of you and your
life first
Figure out who will bleed
and die with you
Then you can call them
your own

You're not a man just
because you claim
Or just because you run the
street
Don't think it's for fools
A real man pays the bills
A real man admits his
mistakes
Blames no one but himself
The streets are not a home
For your girl and a child
It takes one move to come
to exile
Then you'll see what I mean
Don't seek violence and
crime
Just to try and find a new
family
Who hides behind a mask
That in fact is fake as hell
And relies on luck
When it runs out, so will he
So be your own man and
Live for yourself, forget the
rest
Of all the things you
thought were best
Because once again, look
around
At the walls it sure got you
for

-Nors, Santa Clara
From The Beat: There is so much wisdom in this poem, it makes us wonder how you learned these lessons — and why you were not able to apply them to your life before you got here. We don't know where you'll be going from here or how long you'll be "down," but we wonder what your after-incarceration plans are for your life. What would you like to be or do? We sure hope you get as much schooling as you can because the more you learn the more you are able to teach.

Anger

I'm a slave of Anger, anger is my problem. I don't drink, smoke, or gangbang but anger is my problem. I don't think when I'm mad, because of my decisions I'm locked up. Life is crazy, one minute you're free another you're a slave of your own actions. For me anger is uncontrollable.

My decisions are stupid and redundant all because of anger. But I'm happy I'm locked up. I finally realize that I'm stronger than my actions. I realize that all my anger problems aren't worth it at all, because you get hit in the face with Juvenile Hall. God opened my eyes and now I see. I now know there's more to life than becoming angry.

I have a baby in the way. I need to change because I need to provide for him. I don't want my baby to look at my anger and become just like me. I thank my mother for never giving up on me.

Now, I realize I really love my family since I'm the only man in the house. I really need to change because I have little brothers that look up to me. I don't know many things, but I know that this is my last time being locked up. You'll never see me again in Juvenile Hall.

-Francisco, Fresno

From The Beat: Everyone has problems and it's important that we face our problems to make things right. Many times our actions or behavior affect the people that we love. It's best to seek help to learn new skills in directing emotions in productive ways. We commend you for recognizing your problem and the need for change.

The Outs Is Both Easy And Hard

What's upbeat? Today I'm writing about why is life easier in the outs. I think life in the outs is easier because you get to do whatever you want and whenever you want. It's also easier because you have your freedom.

I also think it's sometimes hard being out here because you have to face problems every day. It's also hard because you have to worry about your responsibilities and things you are in charge of. I think the outs is always going to have some easy stuff and hard stuff.

-S, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Thank you for considering both the hard parts and the easy parts of freedom. Yes, it is hard to meet our responsibilities, but freedom demands it. That's why so many young people end up losing their freedom, because they can't use it responsibly. What about you? Will you be a responsible free adult?

I Am A Part of History

As we know, Barack Obama won the election tonight. This election makes me a part of history because it's a change for African Americans. It's a chance to get better jobs and to have a good future for me and my children when they get older. It changes the whole world.

It will be a wonderful eight years with Obama, because even though he has to go up for election again in four years, he will win again.

I hope that us young Black men will get good jobs and more opportunity for resources to get jobs and go to colleges and buying houses.

I like to think of this time as a wonderful and historic time

for all Americans especially African Americans.

So God bless The Beat and God bless the 44th president Barack Obama.

-A Part of History, Alameda

From The Beat: Thank you for this eloquent and thoughtful piece. How do you think Obama's presidency will change things for your children?

The Election Of 2008

I think that Barack Obama will win because he is already ahead in the election. If he wins, I know there will be big changes, and also I will be able to vote and use my voice in the next election. I feel that the election between Obama and McCain is very controversial and people have many different opinions.

Overall, I think America will change economically and more if Obama is our president. I feel that now anything is possible and anyone can do anything they want to make a change. The things I think will change is the conditions of government housing and poor neighborhoods. I think Obama will also try to help the less fortunate more than the government is doing now because as the rich get richer, the poor get poorer.

I've become more interested in the election because it is a more realistic and important election. I hope our war ends and our country will improve economically, and we will help save our earth so we can have it for our kids, too.

-Nicholle, San Francisco

From The Beat: Of course, now we know that Obama won, and he won by a landslide! We hope you're right about the changes you expect, but we know how hard it will be to correct the problems that our country faces, even for a man as smart and decent as Obama. You have obviously thought about this and you write about it very well, so what do you want for your own life? How will you get there from here?

Momma Was Doped Out

I was born November 15, 1991
 A Scorpio who didn't know his life isn't going to be an easy one
 Never full of fun and games only full of tons of pain
 And going thru that as a child only it screws wit' your brain
 You would never think the same once you been through what I lived
 Seen my mother taken advantage of, because she had so much to give
 Divorced twice with two kids restraining order on my father
 And since he had to pay to see me he would never bother
 But he could of at least called, with me going through all I was,
 But I guess after all he forgot I was half his blood
 When my mother found a new man this one was the worst
 Because the only thing he wanted was to get inside her purse
 He never wanted love, only thing he wanted is to use her
 She would never be home, maybe stay once a week
 But would be sleeping all day because she's coming down from the tweak
 When she woke up took a shower then she always left
 Only cared about getting high, didn't give a shhh about the rest
 Since my mom was always gone, my grandma took the role of my mother
 My brother was my father and the homies were my brothers
 I was just another sad story made by the streets
 And was mainly concerned of knowing where my mother could be
 But in my face she would lie when she looked into my eyes
 When they were still watery from all the nights that I cried
 Myself to sleep because I couldn't help but think
 If I was going to see her tomorrow or maybe next week
 I thank God I had some family that was always there for me
 Because they're the only ones who broke, I had nobody cared for me
 All through elementary this is the life I was living
 So I would appreciate the few good things I was given
 Friends 'till the end do all they can to help me out
 Always give a helping hand because they knew my Momma was doped out
 Shout out to everybody who is strictly about making that money keep your head up and stay focused.

-Yaya, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is heart-wrenching. Your words are powerful, and you have an amazing story to tell to people who haven't had a life like this. Your courage and gratitude are also a lesson to those who have also gone through this. Keep writing, you have a lot to share!

I always think about running from problems, when it comes to the system, especially. But then, I'm the one suffering.

Running

I believe that everyone has run from something. I've run before from my problems. The reason why I run is because I sometimes don't want to face up to those problems. But it's true that the things we're running from sometimes will be there after we stop running.

But sometimes I run from a problem to retreat or to face it later. I do want to run. Life sometimes is complicated and difficult. It's just easier, like sometimes when you have to go to school, go to work, and you're just really tired, you just want to stop and not go. That would be one example.

I always think about running from problems, when it comes to the system, especially. But then, I'm the one suffering. That's why I will fight this problem I'm in right now. I will always be rebellious and willing to fight for my own self against the problem I'm in now.

-Ramon, San Francisco

From The Beat: We admire both your rebellious spirit and your ability to express your rebelliousness in words (as opposed to fists or weapons). The world needs rebels who don't just follow along, but resist what they see as wrong and promote what they see as right. We sometimes worry about the things you write for fear your emotions could lead you back into trouble, but we never worry about your mind or your spirit. Keep thinking for yourself and being your own man!

Harder On The Outs

Life on the streets is harder than it is locked up because while you're locked up you have less to worry about. The only thing you can be worried 'bout is being bored to death. Unless you're like certain people who would rather shoot than fight so you have something really to worry 'bout, this is like being on punishment, just a little worse.

On the outs, you got bills, things that need good care, but at least your freedom is there. If you like responsibility, then being here is a waste of time.

-Weezy, San Francisco

From The Beat: Almost everyone else wrote that it's easier out there than in here, but the fact that they are in here tells us that being out there is not easy at all. That's why we admire this piece, because it shows you thought about it. Do you think you are ready to meet your responsibilities on the outs — at least the responsibility not to do the things that lead you to lose your freedom?

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Only The Strong Survive

Well this been bugging me a lot, it's about how people get stereotyped in here. Okay, my whole life was filled with drug addicts, gang bangers, and hustlers. I'm 17 years old and from the city of San Jose. I've had a pretty messed up life. I'm a gang-banger to the fullest and I'm proud of it. I do it cause it's my passion, just like people have a passion for music. Okay, so the point is, in here they sit us down to get information. Then they criticize us. They say that we bring down the community and everything around it. And it's not even like that. We try to strive in life and make it to where it's possible.

If you were to ever stroll down my hood, you'll see homeboys with jobs, cars and a lot of nice shhh. See, the way we grow up was with respect, honor and loyalty. We didn't have trust cause we all had our own situations with our parents. We try to prove very stereotype hatin' person wrong. We make our money maybe in an illegal or legit way but at least we can support our family. A lot of youngsters in my family go to school, but when they do go - the school messes with them and screws with them, but then still go trying to get their education on. And if they can't do that, then they get them a lil' nice jail.

See it's the way we were raised in the streets of San Jose. It was real hard for us to live, we don't have it made like other people. We didn't have no one to show us right from wrong. We had to learn on our own. So, why sit here and judge us? If you never know what we went through, if you ever were to hear one of our stories you probably would sit there and cry. But we don't like that pity shhh. There reason's why we are who we are. So to those hating, come and walk in my size 7 shoes and see what it's like for a day. I bet you, you would never want to walk in them again.

Another thing is, I'm just tired of everything that the system does. Like Prop 6 and Prop 9. Prop 6 is stupid. We aren't "Chesters". The state needs to kick back. This prop would take away our family housing, GA, welfare, and food stamps completely. Our family needs that. They're going to make our lives crazy. I'm hella pissed off now. I ain't going to talk about this anymore. So "Prop 9" ... our youngster don't know wrong from right. They are just babies. It's not right, if anything they should be making props to help us out instead to charge us adults at fourteen years old.

To those doing a grip of time, don't even trip, like Tupac said: "You gotta keep your head up." So stand tall, keep your shoulders and head leveled feet planted. One love

-Nena, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Nena, you have obviously thought about this a great deal and we appreciate your thoughtful argument here. You are right, the reason people often turn to a life of hustling because of issues of poverty. But does this make it right? How about we work together to change the system? You would make a good lawyer.



My Closet

In my closet I cry effortless tears, draped in pain and constant fear, Tired of abuse, am I badly scarred, I try to smile, but my smile is hard. Who would listen to who can't explain their bruises and tears of eternal pain. I try to sustain, but my strength is gone, weakened like a victim who's never done wrong. Am I afraid of my own name when spoke, as if, a sad clown, I have no joke. Deep in my closet of darkness and silence, though lonely, I feel peace in this world of violence.

-Baby

From The Beat: This is well written and tragic. What do you like to read? It sounds like you were influenced by the language of a writer. We wonder if this closet is like a cell. We have to edit your name.

And So I Run...

The biggest thing that myself and many run from is love. I'm not exactly sure about others, but for myself, love is scary. It conveys weakness, a soft spot, and something simply not wanted.

Whenever I feel myself falling in love with another individual, or feeling this feeling we fall love, I would find myself mad or angry at that person for making me weak. Love is not a good feeling that is accepted, nor is it anything needed. It's a power that somebody has over your head until that inevitable day it's broken, and pain replaces it.

Pain always follows love. Well, at least for me it does. And so I run, and will continue to run from the fear of pain and from the weakness of love. I refuse to stop running.

-Mister Nobody, San Francisco

From The Beat: Yes, love does reveal a soft spot. But that soft spot — called a heart — is not a sign of weakness, but of strength. No human being can escape the desire for love. It's built into our natures at birth. We can assure you that the strongest people we have known throughout our lives have been the ones willing to love — even after being hurt. If you do not let love into your heart, you seal it from so many other emotions that humans need to survive and thrive. We don't want to define what love might mean for you, but we do want to encourage you to think of love as a strength, and not a weakness. It's true that love leaves you vulnerable — but it takes a strong person (not a weak one) to allow himself to be vulnerable. We hope you will, and we believe you will stop running from love. It's worth the risk.

Hard Life

While being locked up in the halls, people provide you with food water, clothes and a place to stay, even if it ain't what you're used to. Everything you need to survive and be clean is given to you. Your only responsibility is to behave.

On the outs, though, I had many responsibilities. Since I wasn't living with my moms, I had to get my own food and clothes, find places to stay, and get my own money, one way or another. Even though I wasn't living with my moms, I was giving her some dough to get through and pay some bills.

My homies helped me get money, too. Sometimes they would just give it to me when I was falling out. Even though I had responsibilities, though, I would rather be on the outs handlin' my shhh and being with the homies.

-Gg, San Francisco

From The Beat: This is a well reasoned, well thought out, and well written explanation of why you would rather be free than locked up, even if certain things are easier in here. When you touch down, how will you meet your responsibilities in a way that doesn't end with you losing your freedom?

Life In My Hood, Is The Center1

In my mind, my hood is my life. My hood is what my parents and I all grew up in. The heart of my hood is the community center, because during the day that is where the children have their fun, and at night, that is where my homies and I have our fun.

At those times I feel like nothing can be greater than the center, being with my homies and doing what we do.

I am in a gang that belongs to my hood, and to me it is the best thing, but others are always telling me what they think I should do with my life. But I tell those people that I won't leave the gang because that is where I feel free.

In my hood, in my gang I have everything I want, and since me and my whole family grew up in the same hood and the same gang family, why would I ever leave?

The one thing I don't like about the hood is that the police know who I am, and that I am in a gang and so if they catch me violating my parole, they can take advantage of me, so I have to be careful where I go and what I do.

-Faithful, Fresno

From The Beat: There is nothing wrong with having pride in where you come from, but we would like to know how you try to make your hood a better place? Do the cops harass you because of choices you make? How can you get them off your back while improving your hood at the same time?

Life Is Not Easy, Period!

Like I've just said, life is not easy. Throughout life, many people got to pass obstacles. These obstacles are not easy, and rough at times. I've been through some shhh, and it was never easy to what I've gone through. In other people's eyes, they see being locked up as easier. Some like me, it's easier on the outs.

So, a little insight of why people suggest being locked up is easier. They see it as a housing unit. Food is provided three times out of the day, and you don't have to worry about any problems on the outs of bills to pay, kids to feed. But if you believe that, you're a coward!

I believe it's easier out on the OUTS with your family and friends. To tell you the truth, I believe that it's easier on them, too. On the "ins" you always got to look over your shoulder. On the outs, you got open roads, freedom and no one telling you what to do. So that is a little insight on what I believe.

-Chango, Santa Clara

From The Beat: When young people (or old people) prefer the comforts of lock-up to the discomforts of freedom, something is terribly wrong with the society we live in. Like you, we would always prefer to make our own mistakes in freedom than to be straightjacketed in a lock-up situation. But, as you know very well, to really be free one must balance behavior with responsibility, or risk losing it all!

This Running

It always seems easier to run from every thing. When you don't want to deal with emotions and you want to run from them, it is easier.

I like to run from being alone because half of my life I had no clue who my dad was, and I didn't know that he ran from the problems that he had too like not being ready to be a father.

It is easier to run from shhh then to deal with it, and my dad taught me that behavior, but now it is in God's hands.

-Tanner, Fresno

From The Beat: Your right, running from things is much easier at the time, but in the long run it makes things harder because as much as you run, what you run from will always be there when you look back behind you. We hope you find the strength to stop running and deal with the problems, because in the long run life will be easier that way.

It's Easier In Here

Well, first and foremost, I'd like to give my respects to all the homeboys. This the homeboy G coming at you from the max unit. Well, today I'm going to be writing about which life is easier, being locked up or being out.

To me life is harder on the outs. A lot of times when I'm out, it feels like death could be around any corner. But when I'm locked up, things are more structured and laid back. But shhh still does down when you're locked up, but not as much as when you're out.

When you're out, there's a lot of things you gotta worry about, like getting shot or stabbed, or just the regular life like paying bills and buying things for your kids. Well, I'm going to be living these structured and laid-back life for a long time, so this is what life I think is easier.

-Lil' G

From The Beat: We think there is no worse indictment of the society we live in than a young person like you would find jail easier than freedom! It speaks volumes about those we leave behind (even with the "Leave No Child Behind" initiative). It depresses us both to know that you will be spending a long time behind thick walls, and even more that to you, that incarcerated life is easier than life on the streets! In any case, we hope you keep writing.

McCain Left Cold, Obama Left Bold

Sitting in my bed, thinking I could be dead or I'm posted on the block,
dipping, no dreads hot heads, better yet got bread
they'll roll through your city put you in your deathbed
in your deathbed lead in your head that's what I said
you see I got my stripes all types high street cred
yeah I'm a vet in the war like Osama
or better yet in the white house like Obama
McCain left cold, Obama left bold
strong, tough, who crazy McCain is lazy and got a cold
soul
this girl got blond hair blue eyes
little lady thick thighs
much love a lot of cries
I think about the days that we all gonna die
or better yet the days that's we all multiply
the sun gonna be so hot we gonna fry.

-Mays, Alameda

From The Beat: You talk about the past, and the possibilities for the future. But when you think of your life after jail, what do you imagine for yourself? What do you want for yourself?

Nature's Ways

These are the days of life that I will remember.
Some thoughts I can't just smoke away,
Some ways I can't just change,
Always on top of all my thang.
Always remembering the bad,
Because that's what keeps me mad,
Always thinking with my heart and not with my head,
Because my head is full of anger.
If I did my thinking with my head I would have
Dozens of life sentences for the shhh I would do.
That's why I keep smoking blitzs to keep me paranoid
So my senses can tell me where the danger is.
I want to do right from wrong, but my mind doesn't let
me do right,
Because it always wants to do wrong.
People won't forgive me because I am all gone.

-Julian, Fresno

From The Beat: Letting a substance control your actions may seem easier, but that is because learning to deal with life sober is a hard task to take on, but in the long run, the strength you put into working problems out with head and heart will bring happiness to you as you grow.

My Beautiful Ghetto Where I Live

In my ghetto it is good and it is bad. You got to be careful in my world because one false move can have your life took. I don't mean to be happy about where I come from, but the people who say that they come from nothing need to really see what nothing is.

My mom always worked hard to support me and my two brothers, but living in the ghetto turned me on to the fast life. Really quick I found out that living the fast life isn't good because in the end you have nothing but a lot of sins behind you and have to pay the price for them.

When you are a part of a hood you have to know your limits because even though I am from the ghetto I'll never choose my homies over my family because when push comes to shove, your homies will leave you but your family will not.

I have seen a lot in my life but who is to judge me but God. Others may say that they come from nothing but really they don't know what that means; to have nothing. Those people live in a house where they have two parents who have jobs; the grass is always greener on their front yard and yet they say they come from nothing.

Coming from nothing means living in a two-bedroom apartment with six other people, sharing sheets and pillows, having no screen door on your complex apartment that always smells like piss; that is coming from nothing.

My ghetto does have a good side though; it is the soccer park across the street.

But don't let it's day time appearance fool you though, once dark comes you better get home with your family because bad stuff happens there at night.

-D Boy, Fresno

From The Beat: Coming from nothing is always a subjective view point. What you think as having nothing, someone somewhere else would say is more than they might have. We hope that you can see the glass half full instead of half empty and recognize that you are lucky to have the things that you do, as is everyone around you.

Proud to Be Mexican

I'm proud to be Mexican, I'm not just proud to be Mexican but also proud of the heroes that set us free from people who abused us and ruled our country. I'm proud to be Mexican because not only I know the language but of my culture.

We fight every day to work to live free in this country to watch out for ICE. We stand strong in this country, someday, maybe soon with Obama as president we will get our legal people and become US citizens. I love my culture and those who fought to make it better. All I got to say is MEXICAN PRIDE!

-Cheeto, Alameda

From The Beat: It's good that you feel Mexican pride, but does that mean you also act on it? Does that mean you treat every Mexican you meet with respect and compassion? Does that mean that you refuse to believe there are "enemies" amongst your own people?

Obama, The Real Thing

This election is a big part of history because Barack Obama is an African American. I am one also. But the main reason I said that is because he is the first African American to run and to win the election. But this has changed my view of the country by letting me know that we are way past slavery, now we can do things that we want. It is time for a change.

-Lawrence, Fresno

From The Beat: Change is here, 2008.

Con Muchas Ilusiones

Hey carnales! Les saluda su hermano Joe. Pues la verdad es que estar aqui me causa un mal dolor. Despues de 15 años sin ver a mis padres, vengo y los encuentro. ¿Que es lo que les pasa a muchos que este pais los vuelve loco?

Yo vine con ilusiones de mirar a mis padres, pero les he quedado mal. Me siento mal porque despues de tanto tiempo que no tenia problemas vine a caer a la pinche juvenile.

A todos los que lean esto, quiero decirles que no sean tontos, que gocen la vida porque solo se goza una sola vez. Esto que ahorita estamos viviendo son puras lecciones que Dios nos pone en el camino. Por eso hay que salir adelante por las personas que estan sufriendo para que estes libre.

Algo que extraño es estar con mi novia. La extraño un chingo y todos los días es un gran dolor. Extraño caminar con ella rumbo a la casa. Recuerdo todos los momentos que pasaba con ella. Por eso les escribo para que antes de hacer una pendejada mayor hay que pensar en las consecuencias. Luego vay a estar sufriendo o arrepentido por todo este tiempo que esten aqui. Tambien van a pensar en lo que pudieron haber pasado afuera.

A ver tú, tú, el quien está leyendo esto, "¿no extrañas a tu familia, no extrañas a tu novia, estar con tus amigos en la calle?"

Yo con la fe en Dios espero pronto salie de aqui porque la neta es que se siente gacho estar lejos de sus seres queridos. Nada más les digo esto: hay que hecharles ganas compas porque cuando menos lo piensen va a ser muy tarde.

Espero salir pronto porque tengo muchos planes, los cuales son terminar la escuela y poder ser alguien en la vida. Les mando saludes a todos los cuates que este leyendo esto.

From The Beat: Todos cometemos errores en nuestras vidas. Y podemos ver que tú has cometido algunos los cuales te arrepientes y hubieses deseado que las cosas fueran diferentes. Las experiencias que vivimos nos hacen más sabios y fuerte. Y una vez que aprendemos de ella, nos ayuda a no tropezarnos con la misma piedra. La vida no se te ha ido. Todavia tienes tiempo para remediar lo que no hiciste bien. Todavia puedes pasar tiempo con tu familia y a tu novia. No olvides esta experiencia que estas pasando y no te des por vencido. Todo se puede en la vida cuando se desea con el corazón.

With A Lot Of Illusions

Hey brothers! Your brother Joe is saying hi to you. Well, the truth is that being here causes me pain. After 15 years of not seeing my parents, I came here and I found them. What does this country have that make people crazy?

I came with illusions of being with my parents, but I have failed them. I feel bad because after being out of trouble for a long time I ended up in this damn juvenile hall.

To all who are reading this: I want to tell you not to be stupid, to enjoy your life because we only live life once. What we are going through right now are tests that God is putting us through our roads. That's why we have to succeed for the people who are suffering and want you free.

Something I really miss is being with my girlfriend. I miss her a lot and it pains me so bad everyday. That's why I'm writing this to remind you that every time you do something stupid to think about the consequences or else you will be suffering and repenting through the time you'll be here. You will also think about the things you could have been doing on the outs.

Hey you, you, who are reading this, "don't you miss your family, being with your girl or being with your friends on the streets?"

With the faith in God, I hope to get out of here soon because it's messed up being away from your loved ones. I'll just want you to know: you have to keep fighting because when you least expected, it will be too later.

I hope to get out soon because I have so many plans that are to finish school and be able to be someone in life. I'll send my salute to all who are reading this.

-Arias, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We all make mistakes in our lives. And we can see that you've made a few that you are repented from, and you wish things had gone different. Experiences make us wiser and stronger. And once we learn from them, it helps us not to trip with the same stone. Life hasn't ended for you. You still have time to do some of the things you couldn't do right. You can still spend some time with your family and your girl. Don't forget this experience and don't give up. Everything is possible in life when desired with the heart.

To My Art Teacher of Washington High School

This is an apology letter about the incident that happened last year in ninth grade. I just wanted to tell you. I'm sorry for what had happened and what I did was uncalled for.

I apologize about everything that happened that day. And I should have kept my hands to myself and I should have never used the phone without permission. My actions should have been done like a young adult.

-Lamont, Alameda

From The Beat: This is a real sincere apology to your teacher. It shows a lot of maturity on your part and a responsible action for a young adult. Your actions weren't like a young adult back then, but today with this piece you have surpassed that level. Congratulations and we hope that you can keep this positive mentality going, once you get out.

Welcome To My Life

I got my weapon on my side. Why?
Because we're living to die
Fighting with no remorse when I se a rival walk by
Born to be a mobster that rides organized
I've witnessed wicked crimes
That often turned into homicides
Some call it insane
I call it homeboys being brought up I pain
With hearts of flame
Gang vs. gang
At a young age we were taught to kill
Raised to show now love
Could care less what people feel
This game is wicked
Patrolling these streets
Rivals often get it twisted
Step in the 'hood and listen
We been brought up corrupted
As you can see
I've caused some people to have to be hooked up to IVs
But don't get it wrong
I've been in a hospital also hooked up to an IV
This game ain't easy
What goes around comes around
It's happened to me
You got bare teens going on murder sprees
Tell me that ain't psychotic
But homeboys ain't stoppin'
Give a young mobster a gun and he's going to cock it
Known to shoot whenever tested
Can you blame us
These SJ streets get hectic
In this city you got to ride or find a casket
Show weakness, you're bound to get blasted
With no second chances
If you find this piece misunderstood
Here, take my shoes, go take a walk in my 'hood

-Nightmare, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is a very harsh and scary description of what your life must be like. And we are not here to judge you because we might act the same in the same circumstances. BUT, just because you were raised a certain way, that does not seal your future. We were all raised in certain ways — told the beliefs of our parents, told the right church to attend, taught who to love and who to hate, shown what our elders wanted to show us. But then we grow up, and we begin to test those beliefs for ourselves. We might accept all of them or none of them, or some of them, but we are make our own judgments by now, not simply making the excuse that "we were taught that way." **MAYBE** you have to live strapped, or **MAYBE** you don't, but whichever way you choose to live, there are consequences. When your so-called rivals look the same as you, talk the same as you, speak the same language as you, are the same age as you, and think the same way as you, then something is very wrong with this picture. Are you simply helpless to change anything about your life, or is it that you don't want to?

Running? What A Decision!

Q-vole? So what's shakin'? It's the one and only Chango coming through once again. So the topic is "Running."

Most people like to run from their problems. Don't get me wrong. I've ran from them many times. Basically, running is fear deep down inside, whether we can accept it or not. We don't want to face that certain problem at the moment, but sooner or later it's going to bite you in the ass.

Running never solved anything! So, my story of running is last year when I cut off my house arrest. I told my homeboy, if I ever needed anything, to come to my house. So, one night, he woke me up and said he is in some shhh. So he asked me if I wanted to strike with him in Salinas. I told him that's what homeboys are for.

I left a note for my mom saying that I love her and not to worry, that I'd call her every day that some shhh came up. So, we dipped out in a G ride (Camry) ha ha, you know...

So, to the story, ummm. We dipped out on Highway 101 and siphoned some gas out of a car with a garden hose that I cut with knife to get gas on the way.

We were in Salinas for like two months at his cousin's house. I felt like shhh for like the last three weeks. It wasn't just crackin'. I couldn't eat any time I wanted, and I stole hella clothes. So I told my homeboy that I'm going to turn myself in. He drove me with his lady to my pad. I got home and spent the last week there.

I decided to turn myself in, so I sparked a cigarette and told my mom to drive me to juvie, and she did. I hugged and kissed her. After she dropped me off, I walked around and smoked like 12 stogies and turned myself in. I did three months, and got out around Thanksgiving, so I can tell you running never got anyone anywhere.

So if any of your homeboys decide to run from a program, it's not worth it! Do your tie and get out! Look at me. I'm in the max unit and I'm facing time. So stay up, think of what I just said, and keep your head up, nose clean and chest out!

-Chango, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is a very interesting story, Chango, and we hope some Beat readers understand what you're telling them. At the same time, we're very interested in how your thinking changed while you were in Salinas, from doing the things your homeboy asked you to do, to finally deciding to turn yourself in. That shows a process going on inside you, a developing maturity, and we'd love to know what that process was like. Thank you for this.

Life In Jail Is Easier For Some People

Life is easier on the outs when you are doing the right thing by not getting in trouble with the law.

Going to school, being with the right people and not getting caught in the wrong place with the wrong people.

Getting a job so you will have your own money and not the easy money. Helping your family with anything they need on the house like food, house bills and other thing you can think of.

Life in here in jail is easier for some people like gang bangers or homeless people. People that got family but don't get their help.

The homeless people on the outs don't eat 3 times a day or take a shower everyday.

Now gang bangers they are more safe in here because on the outs they may get killed and inside here all that can happen is they get into a fight but that's about it.

Alright then Beat, holla at you next week, your boy Ghost is out late.

-Ghost, Alameda

From The Beat: You make a good point—you say life is easier on the outs when you are doing the right thing. But how easy is it to do the right thing?

Q-Vo Beat

Today I am going to write about the election. Well honestly I was going for Hillary Clinton, but after she dropped out of the election, I of course started rooting for Obama. I wish I could vote because this is probably the most important presidential race that ever took place. I hope that Obama wins, because I think that he really will help everyone out, and that will make a lot of positive changes. Well that's all I have to say. Alrato

-Gilberto, Alameda

From The Beat:

Inside Or On The Outs: It's The Same

What's up Beat? What I think is that life in here and life in the outs is the same. But at the same time, it's not. What I mean by this is that in here you do the same that you do in the outs, but a little bit different. In here you can kick it with the homies, but in a different way. Like you can't drink a 40 or smoke on a mota. You also can't stay out and kick it like you do it in the 'hood. Just be posted up and not worried about anything because you are actually enjoying what you are doing.

One thing you do in here and you don't do in the outs is the same routine, like you are programmed like a machine that's hypnotized. When they tell you to do something, you just do it, even if you don't like it. In the outs, you get to wear different clothes than in here. Every day you wear the same thing that makes you look like a picture. So, no matter where you are, you are going to do the same, but a little bit different.

-Stomper, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We find this interesting, Stomper. You've made some very keen observations, but your view of life seems very narrow if life on the out and life in jail is so much alike! We know so many people who live their lives entirely differently than what you've described, so we're curious to know if you like the life you're living (which also means life in the hall)? Can you imagine living another way on the outs?

On The Real

To be real, I know that life in general is easier here. You ain't gotta worry about your life and what can and might happen to you. You know exactly what's going to happen on any day. You ain't gonna starve. But then again we're always stressing, 'cause we can't do what we want. See our loved ones or eat what we want.

I know that if I could leave Juvenile Hall on any given day and just come back to sleep and go to school I wouldn't have a problem being in here. I mean I don't smoke no weed, or fiend for no drugs. The only thing that I really need and want is my female. If she could come in here and spend time with me then it would be much easier. But we all know that shhh like that will never happen.

Juvenile Hall ain't hard it's just really boring and depressing 'cause we can't do what we want, when we want. We can't see or touch our loved ones. But I know for a fact that when we're in our rooms is when we really feel the lockdown thing. And since the staff is the ones that tells us what to do, when to do it. That's another depressing thing. No one wants to have to do exactly what someone else tells them to do especially since most of us don't like to listen.

-Young Box, Alameda

From The Beat: You're right, the necessities are there when you're locked up—food, a place to sleep, a sense of structure and consistency. It sounds like you're finding out (the hard way) how important, how necessary actually, love and relationships are to our survival as well. Don't forget what you've learned.

Running

I've been here for heckof months and everyday I regret a lot of things that I did while I was out. Aside from all the dumb stuff, the one thing I regret the most is running from the most important and situations in my life.

My mom and me, and my brother always had problems getting along. We've been through a lot together but it seems like, for the last couple years, it's more like my mom and brother have been hanging in there, and I'm just gone. My mom divorced her husband and we lived in a hotel for hecka long and my mom lost her job and we lost everything.

My mom took it pretty bad and I kinda looked to me like "what now?" So I was 15 years old, and I had hella responsibility. I couldn't find a job so I started selling drugs to support my family. After a while I got tired of it and left my house and started living with a friend and doing hella crazy shh all the time.

I ran from my problems. My mom didn't appreciate anything I did for her. She was sick and just stayed at home feeling sorry for herself, when I was in the same boat as her but I was holding her train and being practically forced to give up everything in my life for her I got to the point where we barely talked. And when we did I said things I didn't mean. When I left she got a job and I was already deep in the system. Now that I been here, and even for the couple of months I was out, I felt like shh for the way I acted 'cause I didn't wait for her to get control of her life. I was selfish. Now I'm in trouble and my mom has my back and is there for me and visits me once a week. I was there for her, but when it got too hard I gave up I'll never make that mistake again.

-Responsible, Solano

From The Beat: Your family has definitely been having some hard times. You are not responsible for taking care of your mom. Of course you can care about her, and understand that she's got it rough sometimes, but you are the kid and it IS too hard for you to take care of everyone. Hopefully you have all gotten some help so it is not so difficult. Sounds good that she got a job. If you take good care of yourself you'll be in a good position to care about your mother and brother, and not feel you have to take care of them.

From Then 'Till Now I've Changed

I remember way back then in 2003 when I started gang banging 'till 2007.

When I caught my first juvenile case for robbery of a Target shopping store and robbery of two more houses. My life started to change when I heard I'll be doing 1 year. Then when I went to court after that year I been told by the judge I was doing 6 more months in Camp Sweeney.

I noticed that the gang I was in never supported me. So I did my 1 year and 6 months and I got out. So I said I'm not doing that robbery shhh again.

Then I went to go see my gang and I told 'em I'm done with banging with y'all. Yah ain't never wrote or visited me with my family. It's cool though I ain't tripping.

I'm done though so peace I'ma still be around though don't trip. So now I'm on my own see how that was crazy for me.

Now this is to everybody: Leave everything to the side just stay in school and do cool ya feels man!

-Mister Unknown, Alameda

From The Beat: You've got some great advice for Beat readers. Being in the hall removes you from the day to day, the ease of being in everything going on. When you're distanced, it lets you see who will put in the effort to support you and be a part of your life – for better or worse. The people who forget you when you're not there are probably not worth your time in the long run.

There Is No Right Way To Do Wrong

It's a lot of things I would change if I were to get another chance. I want to go to school get everything over with. I have a child and she is going to be two years old. I've been in and out of her life. I been doing the wrong thing but the one thing I realize is there is no right way to do wrong. My dad is willing to take me. I have programs that provide counseling and a job waiting on me that pays ten an hour

I know it's going to be easy going to school. I even went to a program when people from prison spoke to us. Even if they do not grant me what me and my dad are recommending I'm going to a group home and do my time.

-Ready For The Challenge

From The Beat: Congratulations - it's good to hear you have so many people in your corner, especially your dad. Good luck and let us know how you are doing!

Life Without God

Life without God is no life at all. If you're ever in here and you don't have God then you are screwed. Cause he's the only one who's gonna have your back forever. But even if you're out though you gotta still pray to God everyday and not do stupid things that go against God's word.

And don't just pray to God when you're truthful and when you're lying. So if you're not being truthful to him he ain't gonna be truthful to you.

-Lil' Casper

From The Beat: That's some solid advice to give out to people who are walking down a dark path. But what else can you tell them besides telling them that they should keep it real with God, because some people can't even keep it real with themselves.

Life Is Easier On The Outs

Life is easier on the outs because you have freedom. You could do anything, you could go to good schools, get a job and also be with your family and friends. You also won't be depressed all the time. Life is harder when you are locked up because you have a lot of stress and in here you can't get jobs and make money to get whatever you want. You can't do what you want in here so that's why it's so hard.

-Daniel

From The Beat: You talk about what is possible on the outs, but what is the reality of what people go through? What is the reality of what you go through?

Home for Thanksgiving

To the Beat. What is up. It's Lil' Knuckle from Livermore. Well today I just wanted to let y'all know how this camp life is treating me. Well first of all tomorrow me and some of the homies and other people finna be eating at this lil' barbecue.

Also for thanksgiving I got to go home from Wednesday through Sunday, so you know ya' boy is feelin' great. I'm gonna be with my family, celebrating and hopefully with my lady. And if I'm not with her that day I'll be with her on the other days. I'm also gonna be with my boys, posted, waiting for them bootsy curfew calls at my house while me and my lady make love to each other...

-Rafael

From The Beat: We hope your thanksgiving went as well as you planned - and you stayed out of trouble. Soon you will have every single day free, will you be able to keep those positive spirits up when freedom just becomes part of your daily life?

Life On The Outs

I think life on the outs is easier because you ain't got to worry about being slammed if you say no. Also you ain't got to listen to no one except your mom and dad. When you come up in here you got to listen to everyone even the people who don't work in your unit.

On the outs man it is way easier because you is free. The stuff that makes it hard when you're locked up is you got to take showers only for five minutes. You locked up all day most of the time. You only get 3 meals a day.

Man it is hard being locked up when you use the bathroom. You have no privies. Someone can walk by when you taking a shhh. That's why I think life on the outs is easier because you basically ain't got to listen to anyone and be threatened by anyone.

-Charles

From The Beat: All those things do sound like a drag. We would hate to have someone watching us all the time, especially when we shower or use the bathroom. Being bossed around ain't no joke. But what exactly makes it easy when you're on the "outs"? We can understand you not being told what to do. But in Juvenile hall you get babysat. They give you clothes, food, shelter, etc, while if you were on the outs, you would have to face bullies, hostile environment, confrontations with people with deadly weapons. What makes the "outs" so easy for you?

It's Hard to Pass the Program

Hey what's up Beat? This yo' boy Nano coming out of Camp Sweeney. Well today I want to talk about my life. Well I been at camp for four months, and I'm tired of this shhh.

I got court on Wednesday but I'm not going to get out, because I got to do 7 months, and now I got three months to go! All I got to say about camp is that it's hard to pass the program. They got too many rules and staff be doing hella shhh. The best thing you got to do is stay away from staff so you can go home!

And don't worry 'bout what the next ninja do, worry 'bout yourself. Just to let you know some of these ninjas are fake. Well I got to go, to all my ninjas be safe and take care. To my family, keep your head up. I'll be out soon.

Camp life is a good life compared to bein' in the hall. Camp life is good to me cause I'm not surrounded by white walls

I been here since June and it is easy not to survive
I seen people come in go like runnin' with they problems would help save lives.

-Nano

From The Beat: We like the way you switched up from prose to poetry. It seems like you are doing well in your programs and staying out of trouble, even though it's hard. What do you do to keep yourself in check?

Get This Done

I know what I need to do to get this done
When I get released I'm a walk out proud cause I've completed and don't run,
Then wake up the next day with a smile on my face 'cause I've won
And stay in the house with female and have fun
I'm gonna make sure I stay away from suckas to let 'em know that I'm older,
And if they tried to talk to me I'll give 'em a cold shoulder.

-J-Baby

From The Beat: Good rhymes here, and good plan too - rise above the petty fights and focus on your future successes and goals. What have you learned about yourself by learning how to walk away from trouble?

Easier

It easier to be on the outs because on the outs you don't have to get told to get in the bed and be told you can't have nothing to eat after a certain time, and you also don't have to wear somebody's else draws and socks. And some tell you when you can go home and when you can't go home.

Some of them tell us when to take a shower, when to change your pants, when to tell you to change your bedding, and when you can come out your room. The best thing that I like is that the school and the hall is shorter than the school on the outs. That the only thing I like about the hall is the school hour is short.

-Jamon

From The Beat: Well we're glad that you do like school. But even though school on the outs is longer it's better. It's nothing like being in your own clothes, and having the freedom to have a pencil and paper in your hand whenever you want it. Knowledge is power kid, and we hope you can figure that out. School is the legit way of hustling and you can really get paid. It's up to you to figure out what you want to do.

Mistakes

Damn still in here I just want to go home so bad I miss it at home. My family misses me so much and I miss them so much I just want to help my family. I thought I would never miss my family like this. It hurts so bad and I miss my lady.

I don't want to mess up no more. It is not no game when you're in here for a stabbing. I'm going to have to do a long time in here but when I get out no more.

I just want to have a normal life. I don't want to have to worry about someone trying to stab me but one was. I'm still in here. I hate how they tell you what to do, but that is my fault for getting in here.

-Daniel

From The Beat: We all make mistakes young homey. But it's how you handle yourself after you made the mistake that tells people who you really are. We all make mistakes and it would suck to sit there and be judged for a mistake when you probably don't get credit for all the right things you do. We're glad to hear you say that you want to change. We hope you stay with that mentality, and remember your mistake is in the past and it's what you do now that counts for your future.

Going To The Hall

What's up Beat? The topics ya' get I couldn't figure nothing out. But I'm going to write about going to the hall. My first time coming to the hall man they took my clothes for evidence but hopefully they would give it back.

Well I got court in December, hopefully I'll get out. And I want to get out and go with my family 'cause I miss them so much. I really want to get out. So that's all I got Beat, 'till next time.

-Yogi

From The Beat: Well we hope that you get your clothes back too. And we also hope that you once you do get out, that you don't come back for you or your family's sake!

Easier On The Outs

Life is easier on the outs because you can do what you want and be happier with your family and friends and have a better life. People can run from just about anything that's going on and not get caught.

All they gotta do is keep it cool and stay away from cops, and don't do nothing stupid.

-Duane

From The Beat: How easy is it to stay away from cops in your neighborhood? And what do you mean by doing something "stupid"? Are all illegal activities stupid? Why or why not?

New Ways

I'm sitting here watching T.V about the election and Obama just won. I feel he is going to be a good president but I ain't tripping off that.

What I'm really tripping off of is getting out and being able to make it and survive. I know we got a president that's making changes, but I got to make changes for myself before tripping off anything of anybody else.

-New

From The Beat: You make a good point. But does seeing Obama become president make you more determined to make those changes for yourself?

Running

Running for what
Running for who
Running for me or
Running for you
Running to happiness
Running to freedom
Running from fear
Running from addiction / am I
Running from you and
Running for me? / no, I'm
Running for you
Running from me

-Pimp Suit

From The Beat: When do you think you will stop running? Or will it ever end?

Damn!

What's up The Beat? I ain't feeling this topics so I'm write about my struggle in here and in the outs.

Damn, just got some news that my patna got stabbed. Damn, I wish I could have been there to help him out cause I would of messed them up bad. Damn, man is hard to be in here because shhh happen nowadays and I'm not out there to put in work, man I'm in here with a bunch of punks. It don't matter to me if they deep and jump me 'cause I ain't scared. Damn, my mom's wants me to stop hanging with them but mom, I'm sorry 'cause I don't want to lie no more to you, I'm gonna still hang around my patnas, know what I mean...

-Rams

From The Beat: Unfortunately we had to cut some of your piece because of its references - next time leave that stuff out. It's really frustrating knowing that life is going on without you on the outs. It can make you feel helpless, like you can't control your own life. But the truth is that your life is just you - it's not the people you hang with. Try and take this time to focus on you - what's important to you and what you want for yourself, outside of your crew.

Easy Life

Life on the outs is easier because you're free. It's also easier because you can come out your room everyday at any time. I also like the outs because you can get fresh air.

Life in here is very hard, not really, cause I'm a young ninja and it's nothing like people say it is. But all it is in here is what you learn at home, wake up eat breakfast, go to school and other stuff.

But I get out in like two more weeks that's nothing. Until then I'm go keep it solid like always.

-Lil' Smashin'

From The Beat: We want to know what your definition of an easy life is. 'Cause when we were growing up it was hard and it still is hard. We want to know what so easy about the life you live on the outs.

Life

I think life is easier in the outs because you could do hella shhh and in here you can't do shhh. People got to tell you to when to take a shower and eat, and went to go outside.

And in the outs you could smoke, pop, drank, and you could eat whenever you feel like it. And life is hella easier in the outs because you could do everything in the outs. You can't do nothing in here.

-Lora

From The Beat: This might sound a bit ridiculous but all that smoking, popping, and drinking is probably what brought you to the hall. Being a hustler/gangster, or just hanging in the streets is a serious task. You have to watch out for haters, jackas', POLICE, NARCS, even if you think you ain't doing nothing bad, if they see you in the streets they're gonna mess with you because you are in the streets. And if you high, thizzed out, or drunk, you ain't gonna be on your toes, and you will slip up and get caught for whatever you were doing.

Obama For President

This election is important to me and to lot of blacks around the world. It may or may not be the first time a black person might be president. This will be history in the making.

I feel that this may be a good for a lot of people being that Obama is said to be president. Therefore, I would vote for Obama as president if I could.

-James

From The Beat: We're glad to hear your honest opinion and how you feel about Obama. Do you think Obama will have a big impact as a president?

Running

I ran from camp like three times. But I couldn't run from the case that I did. This ain't fun being in here in jail I want to run from this place and never come back. But you can't run from problems.

-K-inc

From The Beat: Running from your problems doesn't solve anything. It just creates new ones and makes your situation even more complicated. We're glad to see that you have learned that you can't run from them. How are you planning on confronting them?

The Game is to Hustle

I'm gonna let ninja know how it's supposed to be told
 The game is to hustle till ya' pockets can't hold
 Oakland is the and where them gangstas arose
 Floating on four's
 And haters wanna know but they can't like 5-0
 It's hustle in my blood, no fear in my mind and gangsta
 in my soul
 Everybody seen lil' youngin before
 I do what I want you ninjas do what you know
 I keep it moving lil' homie like the dice on a roll
 I stay with fourteen carat gold but I still iced out cold
 And ya can't stop me I make a lot as you see
 I ain't on fours but my ride is well comfy
 Try and hate and I'll leave yo face lumpy
 My pockets stay bumpy and you across the street tryna
 copy like a monkey
 But you can't quite get it so you feel like a donkey
 I gained a lot of weight 'cause the stuff I got is chunky.

-Lil' Youngin

From The Beat: If this were a battle you know you would win it/but it's the Beat now so slow down a minute/you don't need to puff your chest/to prove that you are the baddest or best/just tell the truth as you see it/there's poetry in you -now be it!

Being Locked up is Safer

I think life would be easier in the outs because time would go faster and you'll have a lot of things to do to distract you. Life in Juvenile Hall is harder. You don't have your freedom like on the outs. In here you get bossed around, you get told when to wake up, when to go to sleep, what time to eat, how long you have to shower. It's a lot different in the outs. You get to do whatever you feel like doing.

I also think that being locked up is safer than being in the outs, because in here you know you're safe, and you also know that no one has a weapon. In the outs you never know when someone may come up to you and put a bullet in your back. So I think it's safer in here, but at the same time you're wishing that you are on the outs with your loved ones.

-Albert

From The Beat: What kinds of things would need to change on the outs to make it safer for young people? Better schools? Stricter laws? More jobs? And what young people like you have to do to help make the streets safer? What do you think?

Always Runnin'

The place is hot, everyone is runnin'
 The police won't stop, they steady gunnin'
 My ninja ran from the police two shots to the head
 Now we say Rest in Peace but that don't bring hi back
 from the dead
 But straight to the fact

-Momo

From The Beat: Your poetry gets wiser each time you write, but as far as succeeding in life goes, we're afraid to see you run in place. This time around are you going to break the pattern?

Locked Up Or Out

It is easier being out because you don't have to be told what to do. You can eat when you want, sleep when you want. In jail you get pepper sprayed or get locked in a room for hours on the end if you do something wrong.

But when you're out you can do whatever you want. You can be with your family. Also you're with the people you choose to hang out with. You don't have to wait to exercise you can get up and go take a run around the block. The main point is it is better being out of jail.

-William

From The Beat: It is better being out of jail. But if being out of jail is better than being in jail, then why do you do things that's going to get you caught up. See you weren't thinking about all these things before you got locked up because you took for granted. We hope you have realized that whatever you were doing isn't worth jeopardizing your freedom for.

John McCain

I want John McCain to win because he's white and everybody want Obama to win. I decided to be different and pick John McCain.

I am African American and I'm proud to be a voter for John McCain. And when he do win I'm gonna go dumb.

-Lil' Charlie

From The Beat: First of all you ain't even allowed to vote young homie. Second of all your boy John McCain doesn't give a damn about you at all. And third of all we can keep going but you obviously don't follow politics or even know enough about any of the two to pick sides. But next time you should do some research on what kind of people they are before you make a judgment. You don't have to pick the other side just to be different, that's called being a follower. A leader doesn't give a damn if everyone was picking him or not, he just makes his own decisions.

My Tears Like A River Flow

Which I was out 'cause the hall ain't cool,
Free Lil' Purp I'm 'bout to take you all to school.
Drugs guns and money is all I know
Rest In Peace to my potnaz my tears like a river flow.
It's hard to let it go I'm mobbin' to the end
Don't trip off us losin' nothing 'cause you know we always win
When I'm out on that block all I'm thinkin' 'bout is y'all,
We all we got my ninjas, even at that last call.
Wish we could go back in time and reminisce
But I will always be there for y'all and y'all will always be me missed.
We all we got.

-Lil' Purp

From The Beat: Another lovely and sad elegy for the friends and family you've lost to violence. It hurts to see the word "win" in here, there is no "winning" in this situation. It's just loss - what would it look like if you could win?

Lil' Ron Ron's Turn to Speak

What's up with The Beat? It's Lil' Ron Ron's turn to speak
I wrote about six Beats and been here for 12 weeks
And every time I catch a beat I can't find my speech!
But I'm gonna write this smooth beat,
and it's not gonna be a speech,
it's gonna be about me and them boys on my team, and
all that I holla RIP.
Walk around on my feet and at that side I got that heat,
So next time I catch a beat and don't see my beat y'all
better be ready for my heat! (Just playin')

-Ron Ron

From The Beat: Awesome and funny rhyme, Ron Ron. The only heat you need for The Beat / is the heat of the words that you rhyme and repeat/ we'll print each piece until your release/and pray that you don't go back to the street! (Not playin')

People Get Shot For Being in Here

Life on the outs is easier because people have a choice to make good decisions and not be messing up. Life in here can be kind of dangerous because when you look at someone bad they get in a fight and people that you don't know and they don't like you when you get out they tell people to look for you and your life is in danger.

People that are out get shot for being in here. People on the outs might confuse you with someone in here and shoot you. When you're on the outs you can change, get a girl, or a job, be more into your education and try to do something with yourselves.

-Jesus

From The Beat: This is one of those situations where no matter what you do it's hard to escape danger. What steps do you take to keep yourself on point?

Obama 2008

I was talking about change way before I heard Obama's speech. So it's only right that I voted for him today. A lot of the things he talked about I can agree with. I feel like I'm a part of a history making movement now. It feels good to make a difference. Everybody of right age should register to vote and voice their opinions. OBAMA 4 PRESIDENT '08 "Change is Coming!"

-Nam

From The Beat: We too want change, in our communities and in the world. We're glad you voted and are part of this historical time!

Pray For Me

Can you guys pray for me this week, because I might get out some time this week or next. Hopefully it will be some time this week, so can you guys please pray for me that I get out this week so I can be with my family and my girlfriend?

I think this is dead time for me because I wasn't supposed to get detained because my PO said she wanted to monitor me on GPS for two more weeks. And that's all I got for y'all, I'm out, pray for me please. Rip Grandma.

-E Money

From The Beat: We hope you get out sooner rather than later, but more than that we hope that when you get out you stay out. Be there for your family and girlfriend, and do what you gotta do to not come back.

A True Woman

As she walks into the room all heads turn in her direction,
the music stops and everyone's breath is taken.
With eyes of honey glistening in the sun, one can't help but
stare, at five foot seven with legs of steel, hands painted nicely
as well as her toes accompanied by some red high heels.
She makes her way to the bar and orders a sex on the beach.
And as she stands there waiting on her drink,
all of the men's eyes were glued to her back side drooling
at the thought of taking a bite out of her round plump peach.
While she tastes her drink with every kiss of her cup
one brave man decides to walk on the wild side and try his luck,
He approaches and she smiles with delight, noticing his smile
because of his teeth that are coke white.

-Baby

From The Beat: She seems like she has it pretty together, is this someone you know?

Election 2008

I writing about the election of 2008
I hope Obama win cause we do need a change
Vote for Obama man not McCain
Cuz if you vote for him then we gonna be in pain
He too old man we gonna be through
A female for vice president she don't know what to do
Obama for president that's all we need
He'll probably build more schools than penitentiaries

-Lil Rolo

From The Beat: We are waiting to see just what he builds, and support his efforts.

When I Was On The Run...

When I was on the run it was hard because I didn't have nowhere to stay and was using too much drugs getting on like shhh ... I was walking around acting like a wino, trying to look for my enemies, eh. At the same time, deep inside I was a soulja serving in the streets.

-Chop

From The Beat: Where did you sleep? Who could you count on? Did your family know where you were? Did you get caught or turn yourself in? Is this the life you want to keep living, or do you have other hopes for your future?

Obama 08

Yeah a brother hella happy we made "history" once again!

We have the first black president!

This is the best thing that's happened to us!

I'm in this unit watching the election unfold!

Too bad I'm locked up 'cause I'd be going freaking "stupid" right now!

I kind of thank God I'm here 'cause I might do something I didn't mean! Obama 08!

-Brandon

From The Beat: It is definitely a day that will go down in history. We're glad that you spent election night safe and sound, and encourage you to listen to our new president -pay some attention to what he does and says from the White House over the next four (or eight) years.

OBAMA Elected President

First black president hello. Today is Nov 4 2008. I was supposed to be working at a poll, but I'm in here. BS! But my ninja won though, and change is what's up! A lot is about to open up for a lot of people. Poor people, black people. Lets hope they don't try to kill my ninja, the first black president.

History was made November 4, 2008. Hello, 2009.

-Fear and Love Me

From The Beat: It's good to know that Obama's victory inspires you - because you can take that inspiration and use it to help yourself move forward in life, leave past mistakes in the past - and start declaring your own victories!

My Stupid Mistake

What got me here the first time was me making a stupid mistake, like every person does once in their life.

I decided to rob somebody because I was stuck in a bad situation and I didn't have no money. I needed some gas for my car because I was livin' the life for a minute, cruisin' around from The Bay all the way to LA all the way to Reno, so I had like two hundred dollars in my pocket that my parents gave me.

I wasted all that money going to these places. Once my pockets ran out of money, and I was stuck my car needed gas and I didn't have my cell phone to call my parents and ask them for some money, so I decided to make a very bad choice that I regret, and rob someone.

But hopefully when I get out I am going to surprise a lot of people by changing my life around.

-Farhad

From The Beat: What are the specific things you plan to change when you "change your life around?" That's a big step, can you break it down into some smaller steps so you can make sure you're planning as much as possible?

Running

What's up Beat? This your boy Carlitos coming from Oakland coming at you today. I'm a write about a time I was a runaway and I ran from my dad (rest in peace). I ran because I didn't want to go home because I was on the run doing it big, you feel me?

Now it hurts me because my dad is gone now, and all he wanted to do was bring me home and now I will never see him again. But I'm a still keep my head up and stay solid. I'm gone.

-Carlitos

From The Beat: Sounds like you went through a lot with your dad, we're sorry he's not around anymore. It's important to, like you said, keep your head up and do the best you can for yourself - make your dad proud.

Your Decisions Might Cost You

Which is easier, life on the outs, or in here? Of course I would like to say that life on the outs is easier, but in here you do not have to take care of yourself.

In here you can't pick your company, or make many decisions on your own, but I would rather be on the outs. On the outs you can make your own decisions, but they might cost you.

-Lamont

From The Beat: It sounds like you are speaking from experience. Did you make a decision out there that you had to pay a price for?

The Judge Won't Believe You

Life on the outs is easier because you have your family when you need them.

I hate life up in here in Juvenile Hall because I am separated from my family and friends, and I believe that once I get out of here I won't come back, because I believe this place is not for me. I am too good of a person to be up in here.

When I am up in my room, it is not a good feeling because I know I am not dangerous to the public. I believe that I am a normal kid like every person that is enjoying life on the outs, while some of us are in here for something that we did not do. Not only does it make me feel so angry, but it makes our families angry too, because they had to pay so much money for a lawyer.

All the judges think that if you had a criminal record from before and you came to the hall again, and if this time that you came you took it to trial because you believed you could beat it because you didn't do it, but the judge won't believe what you say because of your record from before.

-Farhad

From The Beat: It sounds like your family is really sticking with you through this crisis, we're glad they've got your back. But now that you're in here, what are you doing with your time? Don't waste a minute of it, use it to make yourself stronger inside!

Barack Obama Is Our President

So a ninja is real happy. But a ninja would be even happier if I was out. History is today, November 4th, 2008. This day will live long. My heart is golden for Obama. Obama '08 is what it is. If you don't want drama vote for Obama.

-Reese

From The Beat: This election really was historic and important, but the election is just the beginning. Come January, Obama will start putting his words into action. This is the perfect time for you to start paying attention to politics, and what you can do to help.

Jail vs. Freedom

Life on the outs is fun but sometimes it's hard. In jail you have to listen to staff. On the outs you do whatever you want. In jail you don't have to watch your back every five minutes.

In jail you don't worry about anything, you make your choice. At least in here we go to school and actually learn something. Sometime we learn how to do teamwork. In here every gang is mixed. On the outs each gang has its own territory. So which is better for you.

-Cheeto

From The Beat: Do you think that when you get out, you will go back to the life you were living beforehand? Because maybe the learning you are doing on lockdown could prepare you for a drama-free life when you are released. Teamwork, school skills, these are all things that can help you out there in the legit world.

It Goes Both Ways

In my opinion I think it goes both ways because in jail at least you got a bed and blankets to sleep with. But sometimes on the outs when I was on the run I would get kicked out their house and have nowhere to stay.

Plus, in jail you have good hygiene and sometimes on the outs you stay grimy with no showers. But in jail I like school better because I would rather be in class than in my room but on the outs I would rather smoke and kick it instead of going to school. In jail I got good strength, at least I got three meals a day to eat, but if I got a chance to run I would probably run though because I could be with my homies and kick it with my females.

I would want to go to college, but I'm tryin' to get through high school first—but I don't know though, if I can get through the work. I don't think I have enough patience for the work.

-Tanner

From The Beat: It takes a while to learn patience, some of us spend a lifetime trying to do it—but just based on your writing skills, it seems like going to college wouldn't be too hard for you. Maybe patience is something you will learn more about, just by practicing it!

Lion In the Jungle

I am the lion in the jungle
hunting for food.
I need money to start a life
grow up have kids
provide for them
and start my new life.
God rest my father's soul.

-Davon

From The Beat: You do need money, we all do. But a lot of people go for "easy" money, and then lose their lives or freedom because of it. So be a lion—but be a smart lion, and get your food legit!

Thug Life

If I have kids would I live to see them grow up, I don't know
I live the life of a thug ninja until I go
No broken promises but yet I'm still alone
I know I'll die alone but I'm still hopin'
Should I risk my life I still ask myself
I been through so much pain I wanna blast myself
I still say I'm mobbin' that's the end of the problem
I live the thug life check mate I'll holla

-Young Marco

From The Beat: We're interested in this piece, yet we don't know exactly what you mean. What are you still hopin' for? It sounds like you've already risked your life, and that you might want to have kids. If you do have kids, it's not fair not to stick around for them. They would need you. If you did leave the thug life, what life would you like to build?

Waiting and Politics

Whats up with the Beat? You know me still in this thang waiting to get transferred. I hope Barack Obama wins the election thang and becomes president. Because president Bush was bull shhhing when it was his time to shine. And McCain was up there with him through the whole eight years. The world suffering. So what makes people think he can do a better job now? I hope Obama becomes president and makes some serious changes. But I think they will assassinate him but I hope I'm wrong.

-Lano

From The Beat: We hope they give him consistent and might protection. We need some serious changes. How about you, how are you? How are you planning to use your time once you are transferred?

My Girl

I was living the life. I was with this girl. And I fell in love with her.

Not to be on that square shhh but I did. Me and her been together for eight months and the stuff we been through, it feels like we been married for 20 years. I mean she took me in when I didn't have nowhere to go. And I was living with her and being with her every day. I mean I did cheat on her from time to time but I really loved this girl and I started to settle down for this girl. I used to just stay in the house with her. And I didn't even go to my hood like that. I started cattin' off on my boys. And people stay speakin' on me, lying to my girl about old stuff that's already settled.

But look, the day I came to jail was the day my girl told her parents that she was pregnant. I didn't know that she was pregnant, till one day I got a phone call and I called her and she told me that she was three months pregnant. I felt like the happiest man in the world. She's five months pregnant now, we have four months to go. My mom said her belly got huge and all she eats is fruit. All I'm waiting on is to go home to my wife. I hope I have a boy, but whatever God bless me with, I'm gonna be happy. I plan to have two more kids, my momma gonna have a lot of grandkids, and my dad too.

I just got to do right by my girl when I get out, and stay out of those grimy streets. The only sad thing about me having a baby is that I am not going to be there to cut the cord. I think about that every day, I ain't going to be there to hold my girl's hands. I'm about to get a special visit this month. I get to see my family and my girl. I get to rub her belly for the first time. Man during this time in the hall I am getting honest with myself and trying something new.

I'm tired of losing homies to hustling and being locked up. God has opened my eyes and made me wake up. So many things I been through got me fed up. A lot on my chest, sometimes I want to give up. I heard a lot of people say that I need to grow up. But a lot of times I'm mad so I say shut up. I'm tired of all this so I know I need to change up. This comes around I'm gong to make up. I'm out Beat, stay up.

-Charles

From The Beat: You have a lot of changes coming up, it must be terrifying and exciting at the same time. What are you most looking forward to about fatherhood? What are you most concerned about? Who will be helping you and your girl raise the baby? Are you prepared to turn away from the friends who don't respect your responsibilities as a proud father?

Election

Whoever wins presidency I hope is the best candidate. Almost everybody I know wants Obama to win. Even though I'm a few weeks too late to vote, I'm still interested in who's going to win and the changes that are going to come about. This election will affect my future.

-Brian

From The Beat: We're all waiting and watching and trying to figure out how we participate in our future with this new president!

Running Away

People run away because they choose to. People run away because they don't care about the big picture and it just be like that sometimes.

-Problem

From The Beat: It's true, sometimes people don't care, sometimes they care too much—sometimes whatever is happening at the moment makes the big picture seem unimportant.

Running

Man people run 'cause they want to.

-Lil' Tonio

From The Beat: Sometimes. But what does what you want at the time have to do with what you want for your life? What if those are two different things? Then we think it might not be because they want to, but because they don't know how to stay.

RIP Carl

I wish my brother was here in 08. I wish the people on the streets get a life and some get a wife. I wish I can get my life right and keep my game tight. I wish my brother stay at home that night. I wish he could have been here to see day light.

-Lacey

From The Beat: How can you get your life right? What do you mean by right? What do you have to do to get yourself there? You always wish for peace for your brother, what about peace for you? Can you let yourself be in peace about his death?

Change is here, first president to care! Let all America hear. Stand proud for what he's done so sit back and relax, change is here.

About YA

So ninjas talk about how YA is bad. They say ninjas get raped, ninjas kill each other. That shhh ain't true, it's all BS. I been to YA. It's all about doing your program and not messing up. Do yo' program, that's all I'm going to say – so if you go to YA, don't trip.

'someday you will be out like I am in five months. Just keep your mouth closed and you will save yourself from fighting. That's all.

-Cheeto

From The Beat: Thanks for passing on your knowledge. Do you feel like you got better at walking away from drama because you were in YA, and you might be able to keep walking away once you are released?

Obama

This election means a lot to me. This election will help African Americans. I hope he does win this election. If he does it will be easier to go to college.

-Paul

From The Beat: We hope this means you plan to go to college! In our opinion that is a great decision for you to make.

Election 2008

Finally there's a chance to be the first black president in the White House. He won't stop I just hope my black brother don't get popped.

Change is here, first president to care! Let all America hear. Stand proud for what he's done so sit back and relax, change is here.

-Lil' Tone

From The Beat: What do you hope he changes that will affect your life?

I Think Of You

I think of you
So often
You keep dropping by my mind
I think of you
At the oddest times
And in the strangest places
How nice it feels
To be constantly surprised
By beautiful thoughts
Of you
When I
When we first met
I held back so much
Afraid to show my deepest
Feelings
As I got to know you better
Your gentleness and honesty
Encouraged me to open up
And I started a trust
In you that I never had
With anyone else
Once I started to express
My feelings
I realized that
This is the only way
To have a real relationship
It is such a
Wonderful feeling
To let myself
Be completely known to you
Thank you
So much
For showing me
What two people
Can share together
I look forward to
Spending many beautiful
Times with you
...Sometimes it still amazes me
How I get anxious and thrilled
And thoughtful about you, I guess
Maybe it's because I just keep
Falling wonderfully in love with
You... over and over again

-Jesus

From The Beat: These poems speak clearly about how love makes everything better, all of life more beautiful and exciting.

Easier On The Outs

I say life is easier on the outs than in here. Because when I'm out I could do whatever I want. I can take a shower whenever I want. And eat or turn my room light on and off whenever I feel most important, I could eat whatever we want.

-Young Mickey

From The Beat: So you have more freedom when you are out, but what about stress? Is it more stressful on the outs than inside?

Going to the Pen

My name is JJ. My birthday is on the ninth. I am going to the pen for two years and then bounce back.

-Lil' J

From The Beat: Good luck, study, read, write, get all your skills up. Take good hard looks at yourself, be kind to yourself too. And then when you bounce back you'll be in good shape.



Easier to be Inside

It is much easier to be inside locked up, because you don't have to do worry about helping to pay bills, do laundry, work. Some people think that it's hard to do on a daily basis. I think they are just lazy.

Even if you have kids there is always time to work and take care of your kids. From my experience doing laundry, cooking, cleaning, and doing all the house chores, are an easy thing if you enjoy to them, you'll like to teach each other about it.

-Sad Boy

From The Beat: Did you grow up in a family where everyone cooked and cleaned together? Are you a good cook? When you have children, do you plan on raising them to help around the house as well?

Hard

I think if I was able to see my family every day life in here because:

I have more structure

If I could see my family everyday and was able to give them hugs I think in here would be easier.

-Sed-B

From The Beat: So when you get out it sounds like you need to organize your life more so that you create a structure that helps you. Where you set it up so that it's all what you have decided is best for you, school, work, exercise, etc.

Running

Running did not help me. I run from 10 group homes. It just ended me back in diz place and I will never run from another group home again.

-Mikey

From The Beat: What's different for you now? Ten is a lot of group homes. Why did they keep giving you more chances?

Visit

I had a special visit last week that's why I didn't come last week. I was happy when I saw my whole family for the first time since I got locked up. My mom made some steaks, eggrolls, and some rice. I couldn't finish it because I'm used to the food they feed me in here. I brought back a lot of food to feed the people I really talk to.

Before I left my special visit, I wanted to cry because I haven't hugged my mom in over two years and it felt good to hug her. When I was on the outs I never was at home because I was out late at night doing my thang.

-Lil' Kev

From The Beat: What a great visit, with food from home and good hugs. How do you see your life on the outs before, from the perspective you have now?

No Stress On The Outs

Well to me life on the outs is easier because you got more freedom, 'cause in the hall you are locked up like an animal in a cage. You get better food on the outs. You wear clean clothing, not used clothing. Well just in general I love that outs and that's because of freedom - and there is no stress on the outs.

-Smalls

From The Beat: We hope you get out soon - because there's no doubt that freedom is what we all need. What steps will you take to make sure you never lose that freedom again?

Shining

I'm shining so bright
my sight is so bright
I'm tryin' to shine in the day and night
I'm tryin' to change my life
I want freedom, I want to be free
I don't want to be in jail
Life is a trip --
how stuff happens so fast.

-Tceeyz

From The Beat: What will it take for you to shine the way you want to, and find a way to hold on to that freedom you need and deserve?

Life

Life is all about the choices you make. Sometimes life can be hard, you may even feel like life isn't worth living at times. Most people get high off life like they just love everything about it.

-Lil' Bg

From The Beat: Thanks for sharing your thoughts with The Beat. Next time we'd like to see more from you though - this writing seems to be missing pieces. Like, which type of person are you? Do you get high off life, or feel like life is hard, or both? Why are there these two types of people, and how did they get that way?

Which Is Easier, Life On The Outs Or In Here

To me my opinion some people don't have a place to stay and there's a room here some people don't have nothing to eat you get 3 meals a day. Me I don't have that problem getting up early, because I get up early on the outs to me it's easier in here because I don't have to worry about nobody doing nothing to me so that's my opinion.

-Young Boobie

From The Beat: What would it take to not have to worry about anybody doing anything to you when you are released eventually? Is there any way for you to make that happen? Would you have to move? It doesn't sound very free if you have to worry all the time.

Running

I've never ran from a group home or anything like that, but I did run from the police a couple of times. I ran from the police because I had a warrant. Every time I ran from the police, it always makes it worse. And every time I go to court, they bring up all the times I've ran from then, and also mention everything I've been doing.

As I get older, I start to think, man, I shouldn't have ran from them, and I shouldn't been doing what it was I wasn't supposed to be doing.

-Gregory

From The Beat: One way to measure maturity is if you learn from experience rather than just do the same thing over and over again. You have seen that when you run, things get worse, and that has made you start to think about changing. That tells us that you are beginning to think like a responsible young adult, and no longer like a child. Good for you! Now that you're thinking, what changes do you foresee in your future? (We didn't print your piece about swallowing your pride because it was only three sentences, not long enough for The Beat. However, swallowing your pride is not about saying something you didn't want to say, it's about not saying something you did want to say, but chose not to because it wasn't in your best interest to say it...)

War In Iraq!

Man, I ain't thought of it lately, but I got two homies in the Navy Seals and they been gone since '04. One is black and the other is Vietnamese.

I just hope that Obama does the right thing and brings the troops home!

Man, I ain't seen one of my ninjas since '07. He was on R and R, (rest and relaxation). He was like, "Damn... 'hood looks different," and I was like, "Damn, you look different, bra, hella older." He was like, "That's what 24/7 of shooting and moving does to you!" He was hella big. His hands were like concrete, but they weren't dirty. He go on a mini-mission he can't talk about.

They told me about being in training, that M16s don't do shhh but leave a hole when they shoot into a watermelon, but when a choppa, an AK47, hits a watermelon, it explodes. They'd rather have an AK47 because it does more damage, but it has that kick back recoil against your shoulder.

Well, Beat, hopefully Obama does the right thing! Until I touch down!

-Lil' Rob

From The Beat: What did they tell you about what their experiences in the Middle East are like for them?

Waiting For The Judge

Life on the outs or life in here? Life on the outs is hard with a warrant. You can't get caught doin' shhh or yo' ass goin' down. But living with a warrant ain't shhh, so life in here you gotta manage.

I want to get out free of the law. I want to go to school. I'm a 12th grader that's supposed to be graduating this year. It's depressing knowing you gotta wait for a judge to determine your fate. I'm ready to get out this system, go home to my family, my baby sister, my older sister and my new nef-nef, Junior.

It's a block war, mayne. It's funky on the streets right now. Ninjas getting dropped every day. If you love yo'self, stay away from beef.

-Tae Gutta

From The Beat: But why would you have a warrant? Doesn't that mean that you bear 100% of the responsibility? You didn't do something you knew you had to do, like be somewhere or do (or not do) something, so you handed your fate to the judge you're now waiting to determine it. If you get the chance you want to return to those you love, do you plan to change anything about how you live your day-to-day life, or do you think you'll be picking up another warrant?

Nothing's Going To Change

What's good with The Beat? You know a ninja in here doing this time in this shhh house. But now Obama the leader of the U.S. But I don't think nothing go change. Just because he black don't mean shhh.

-Tishan

From The Beat: You could write much more than this, Tishan. For example, if you don't think anything will change when Obama is president, then change must start with you... What do you plan to do to change? Or, do you plan to stay the same, which means you plan to be spending more time following orders from a bunch of strangers behind walls.

What's up Beat?

I'm hella mad. I wrote about my brother last week an' I feel y'all disrespected my brother and me. When he was alive, everyone called him by his nickname, not no nasty D-R. So the next time I write about him, don't write D-R 'cause on some real shhh, y'all really disrespected my bra. Now that he ain't here to defend himself, I got to do it, so I don't take it kindly.

Then, at the end of my letter, I wrote "We all we got," and y'all didn't put that in there. So on some real stuff, when I write stuff, please don't mix up my work.

-Queen B

From The Beat: We're sorry, Bri, but we cannot honor your request in our magazine. We did include (in this piece) your sign off, "We all we got," but we won't include it again. It's an empty cliché that identifies your 'hood, and when we see the same phrase appear in many different people's writings, we know that it's not original or useful. So we won't include it again. As to your brother's "real" nickname, we're very sorry, but we won't put it in The Beat. It refers to a spot (or, at least, will be seen by others that way), and can only cause problems. We don't mean to disrespect your brother (we're very sorry for your loss), but he is not the only one who would like us to use that same name, and we always say no.

Keeping It Real

What's good with The Beat? Y'all came with some god topics today. It actually touched me, brought up some of my past.

Swallowing my pride is something I had to do a couple of times. People caught me slippin'. I had to keep it puuin' when they said something. They caught me slippin' with no cannon. But it only brought more finger to me, which made me try to stay with a cannon by any means.

So what I suggest to ninjas is that they keep it real and stop tryna be somebody the ain't. Swallow yo' pride, boy. Shhh don't hurt.

-Rico

From The Beat: You should be thankful that you were not strapped at the time. You had to swallow your pride, but you didn't have to swallow a hollow point, and you didn't have to put yourself in a situation where you might have taken a life and paid with your own by being sent to prison forever. Sometimes, swallowing your pride is exactly the thing to do so that you're not facing even more serious consequences.

For The Raza

Growing up at The Point and The Mission is my life. Banging life is a life I live. Do it for the Raza!

I hang with my familia, and I trust certain homies. But some peeps you should not even trust. It's a trust issue, around the 'hood. Getting stabbed in the back with a homie is not what I call a warrior.

A'ight, I'm out.

-Kidd

From The Beat: So, you're doing it for the Raza, although "doing it" has led to the premature death of far too many of the Raza, and the long-term imprisonment of so many more! Latinos now make up the largest percentage of California's huge prison population — nearly 70,000! If what you're doing is "for the Raza," we sure would hate to see what the results would look like if you were doing it against the Raza.

Life On The Outs

What's up with The Beat, yo? You asked me what's harder, in here or in the outs. I feel bein' on the outs is easier because you can do what you want, sleep in yo' own bed, wear yo' own clothes, eat better food, have fun, don't get on room time, be with yo' family and out with yo' goons, and just do you straight like that.

Dawg, when you in here, they do you real wrong. They think they can talk to you any kind of way, and they think they gotta have respect from you, and they don't do the same. They got me messed up straight like that, dawg.

Me, I'm not coming back here 'cause it ain't even coo'. I got a son at home needing his mother, and it ain't right. I can't stand bein' away from him 'cause I love him to death straight like that. As I write this, I'm crying. He's al I think about when I wake and go to bed. That's why I'm go make sure I'm go have my son grow up to do right.

I'm gone, yo. 'Til next time.

-E-Bones

From The Beat: You've got to look at both parts of what you wrote so you don't make the mistakes that got you here in the future. You love your son more than anything, and want to make sure he grows up to do right, which means you want to be with him at every step along the way. But you also say you want to be free to be with your goons and have fun. We're not against fun, but we know how often that "fun" gives the system power over your life. What we're saying is that you have to start sacrificing some of that fun you miss in order to be the mother you want to be. That's what mothers do; they put their own needs and desires aside and do what they have to do for their children. In freedom, you will be tempted to go back to your old ways, but if you do, it will be a sign that you forgot just how much being with your son means to you... an to him!

Better On The Outs

Life on the outs is easy because you can do whatever you want in a good way. You just tot to know what you wanna do. When I'm in the halls, it better for your life. It's better when you get out and it's easier.

-Cambodian

From The Beat: The problem with having the freedom to do what you want is that you have to use that freedom responsibly. If you don't, you'll face the very consequences you're living with right now.

Fighting For No Reason

One day we was standing doing nothing on a block. It was me, like five ore people, and a group of kids or teens. They said, "What's up? Where you from?"

We weren't from nowhere, and out the cuts we started to fight for no reason. I guess we disturbed the houses. They called the cops on us and we broke and started running like a couple of bocks. We all got away, an' I thought we was all gonna go to juvenile.

-Juan

From The Beat: Why do you think boys are so ready to fight? If you had been caught and taken to the hall, would that fight have been worth it? When you get out of here, do you plan to change anything about how you live, day-to-day, so that you won't have to come to a place like this ever again?

Stressing

When I run, I hate doing it. But I stress when I go to groupers. I want to be with my family. But they said because my behavior I can't. I hate it when they say it. I cry. I don't like when I go through things like this. It's personal.

-Danai

From The Beat: So you run from the grouper to be with your family and you end up in the hall instead... Sometimes, you just have to go through it, take your medicine, and wait it out so that you can go home without looking over your shoulder.

Better Here Than Homeless

I feel better living outside because when I get in trouble, I have a family member to go to and take my feelings. But when I'm in here, I have no one to talk to 'cause I don't know anyone all close like that. But if I had nowhere to go, I would come in here rather than go and stay on the streets.

-Antanaya

From The Beat: Of course it's nice to have people on the outs to go to when you get in trouble, but then getting in trouble often leads here where you have no one to go to. The best solution would be to be on the outs without getting into trouble...

It's Easier On The Outs

Life is easier on the outs, even though it's hardships and temptations that tempt you to do negative things. Life on the outs is easier because you control yourself. No one is able to tell you what to do. Also, life on the outs is easier because you don't do the same thing every day. The outs lets you make your own choices.

In here, you get fed up by certain people. In here you're put with people you not cool with. People on the outs are able to have freedom. You just have to be ready for the consequences that come with the mistakes you make.

-Wittie

From The Beat: It's not just mistakes that carry consequences. Everything has consequences, including doing the things you should be doing. (For example, going to school has the beneficial consequence of educating you and giving you a diploma.) The trick on the outs is to balance the freedom (that you lose in here) with the responsibility that all freedom requires. It's when you use your freedom to do irresponsible things that negative consequences are the result.

In Here I Can't Do Me

Which is easier, life on the outs or life in here? In a way, life on the out is easier because you don't have nobody tellin' you what to do and when to do it. You ain't got to be around hella messy-ass females. Basically, you can do you.

But the only thing I could say that's OK about it I that you ain't gotta worry about when yo' next meal gone be. And you ain't gotta look behind yo' back all the time... But I'm not sayin' you don't!

-Erianna

From The Beat: The hall is not designed for you to like it; it's designed for you to hate it, so that you won't want to come back. But, in order not to come back, you have to do some things differently than before because if you do the same as before you can expect the same consequences as before.

Tired Of Being In This Joint

I'm tired of being in juvi. It feel like the counselors running your life. You only get two sheets, two covers. You have to sleep in a room with another dude, use the bathroom in front of him. You only get three meals, three hours of rec. You can only make phone calls on certain days. It's showers at 5:30 in the morning!

I'm sick of this. I have to use my thoughts and find some goals and steps to stay out of here, but fast, ya know.

-Yung J-Newt

From The Beat: We're not surprised that you're sick of being locked up. That's how it is designed, to make you so sick of it that you never want to return. So, what will it take for you to find those goals and to design those steps that lead away from here and towards a better and freer future? We suggest the first step is to go to school and get your diploma. Other good things will follow from that. What are your ideas?

My Black President

I have a black president and I am black! What a coincidence. We finally have a black president, after all these years. But personally, that does not mean nothin', 'cause that's not going to change racism. It's just another Democrat.

-J-Pop

From The Beat: We're sorry you don't see Obama's victory as having anything to do with your life and your future. We agree that his election does not end racism, but we believe it will have its positive effect. People our age would have said (when we were your age) that a black person could never be elected president in our lifetimes, and we were wrong! Now it has happened, so we know there has been progress on the issue of race. By the time you reach our age, we believe you will see it, too.

Running

I'm tired, man, of being in this system. Man, I'm being treated, man, like a damn prisoner in Pelican Bay or San Quentin. Man, I'm tired. I'ma try not to come back at all. But it hard, man, to try to stay out of trouble, man. But I'ma try.

-La'Vance

From The Beat: The problem you're facing is that it's not only hard to stay out of trouble, it's also hard to live with the consequences of getting into trouble. In other words, you hate it here, and here is where you are sent when you get into trouble. So, you have to decide which is harder, doing what you're supposed to do when you're on the outs, or doing what you like to do and then having to deal with what it means to be locked up. We know what we would choose, but what will you choose?

Swallowing My Pride

Yes, I had to swallow my pride. One day the counselor was giving me time for somethin' I didn't do. I felt like arguing, but I didn't. I just put my balls aside and took the punishment.

-Sancho

From The Beat: As far as we are concerned, what you did was a sign of your maturity. Sometimes in life, we have to pick our fights. We think you avoided one that you couldn't win, and you were wise enough to see that and do act accordingly. We don't think you put your balls aside at all. It takes balls to stand down just as much as to stand up!

Obama '08

What's good wit' The Beat? It's ya boy, Lil' Rob, up here at the Ranch, just chillin' an' shhh. Well, where should I start?

Obama, man, he won! Finally we got a minority in that White House. Tired of the bullshhh Republicans running shhh! They don't do no good for the unfortunate, ya dig? It's about time we got someone that's wit' the Democratic Party (for the people)!

McCain ain't shhh. He wanted to raise taxes for the unfortunate (me) and just make the rich richer and make the poor poorer. Shhh ain't coo'! They greedy, man! They already eatin' and they want it all! Just like the streets, everybody need to eat! But when someone gets greedy, they get (smacked off), ya dig?

Obama at least wants to help the unfortunate (me) and give more opportunities wit' school, health benefits, and average tax pay, not raise them!

Well, Beat, that's all I got today! Until I touch down!

-Lil' Rob

From The Beat: Obama does seem to have a good heart for the poor, the unfortunate. What could an Obama presidency do for your homies, your family and you, personally? If the government offered free college for all of you, would you go? What about free job training? Job placement, especially for those of you who have a juvenile "record"? In your opinion, has offering some of you at the Ranch, in juvy, a low-cost independent living apartment when you're out again, helped?

Running Away From Home

One time I ran away from home because me and my mom wasn't getting along. We were arguing too much so I decided I needed some air. So I left and went with my friends outside. Then, later on that night, I stayed at my friend's house.

-The Boss

From The Beat: Most of us have run away from home at one time or another — even if we only stayed away for a few hours or a day. Did things get better between you and your mom after that? How are relations between the two of you now?

A Black President Will Bring Change

Now that Obama is the president, now I think it will be new things happening and a lot going on. They will be thinkin' that he's doin' the wrong things for the U.S.

People trying to kill him. So it will a lot of new things going on for us. Really, black people 'cause we got a black president. So it's goin' to be a lot goin' on.

Obama, y'all!

-Mitchell

From The Beat: Actually, he doesn't actually become the president until January 20, 2009, at noon. But after that, what kind of new things do you expect? How do you imagine life might change, for black people or for anybody?

Life On The Outs Or Life In Here

Life on the outs must've been hard, but life in here is harder. On the outs, I didn't have no support and in here I ain't got one visit or no letters. I must be getting played 'cause my PO tried taking away my phone calls so I wouldn't talk to anyone on the outs.

It's messed up since I've been here, but I been keeping it solid. I ain't stressing' or complaining. I'm here and keeping my head up if I was out, I would be forced to look out for myself. If I gotta live life illegal to get it, I guess I gotta do what I gotta do to survive on my toes, taking the backstreet route, but looking out for whatever.

-Taliban-Rascal

From The Beat: But if you have to resort to illegal activity "to get it," then aren't you just asking to lose your freedom again? What can you do to prepare yourself to be able to take care of yourself on the outs without risking your freedom?

Swallowing Pride

I do not know how to swallow my pride. I wish I knew how because it'll make things better for me and my whole family. It will help me let things go that are not that big of a deal and have never been important.

-Lua

From The Beat: You need to explain some of what you write. For example, why do you find it so hard to swallow your pride? What examples can you think of that show how much better off you or your family would be if you did swallow your pride? The Beat wants you to write just one topic, not all three. You have the ability to write a full page or more on any topic you choose, and that's what we'd like you to do. We are going to repeat this instruction in each of your three pieces!

Running

I ran from my problems, and al it has done for me is get worse. Whenever I try to ignore my problems, thy always come back to me. But even worse than at first.

-Lua

From The Beat: You could have turned this piece into a much stronger one (even a Piece Of the Week) by giving examples. Tell us of a time you ran from a problem and what happened. The Beat wants you to write just one topic, not all three. You have the ability to write a full page or more on any topic you choose, and that's what we'd like you to do. We are going to repeat this instruction in each of your three pieces!

Can't Run From Life

I felt like running for many stuffs. But after I think about it, I could never run away from my life. It would affect people around me. As I grow older, I become to have more responsibilities.

-Lil' Allen

From The Beat: This almost didn't get published because it is so short! You could tell us so much more that we want to know. For example, what responsibilities do you have now that you didn't have when you were smaller? Who are the people around you that your decisions affect? You can write much, much more!

Gettin' It Together

What's up with The Beat? This ha boy Luietant I'm still in this hellhole, thuggin' with the guys. This shhh ain't for me. It's some young clowns talkin' shhh, but I ain't trippin' they don't want to see me on the outs. You know how I like to handle it.

But I'm planning to straighten my life up and get it together. But when I touch down, you know we get down.

-Luietant

From The Beat: We're not sure what your name means the way you spelled it, but if you're trying to represent a military rank, the word you want is spelled "Lieutenant." You'll have to explain to us how you can both threaten someone on the outs and tell us that you're planning to straighten out your life. You can't have it both ways, so you'd better think twice or three times before you "handle it."

My Second Time

I never been to a group home. I only been to YGC two times. This my second time. When I get out, I'm going back, and this time I'm not coming back in here, I'm going to be on my feet. I'ma make sure that I stay out and get my money on.

-Lil' Rocko

From The Beat: Well, we certainly hope this is your last time in this place, or any place like this. But we're not sure what your plan for staying out is. (We had to take out your sentences that had initials instead of words, since we don't know what they stand for.) One thing we know for sure, though, is that if you go back to doing the same things that brought you here to begin with (and brought you here again), then you will face these same consequences again, and the money you'll be "making" will all be going into the system's pockets.

Props To Obama!

What's good with The Beat? Man, it's crazy. It's 11/4/08... Man, Obama just got elected! I give him his props. But you feel me, I'm still gone do my thang, you dig. When ninja get out, shhh might probably change.

But a'ight, Beat. I'm out.

-Delvonta

From The Beat: What do you mean when you say hat "shhh might probably change" when you get out? What sort of change are you imagining? What would you like to change?

Something On My Mind

What's up with The Beat? It's yo' boy, Tizzle, down here at the Ranch, doing this time like always, but yea, it's a lot bein' on my mind this week. I been thinking 'bout my family and friends--how I should be out there with them, and doin' what I do. But other than that, I been cool. It's just that I been away for a while, but I'm go' be cool. It's just a lil' something on my mind.

-Tizzle

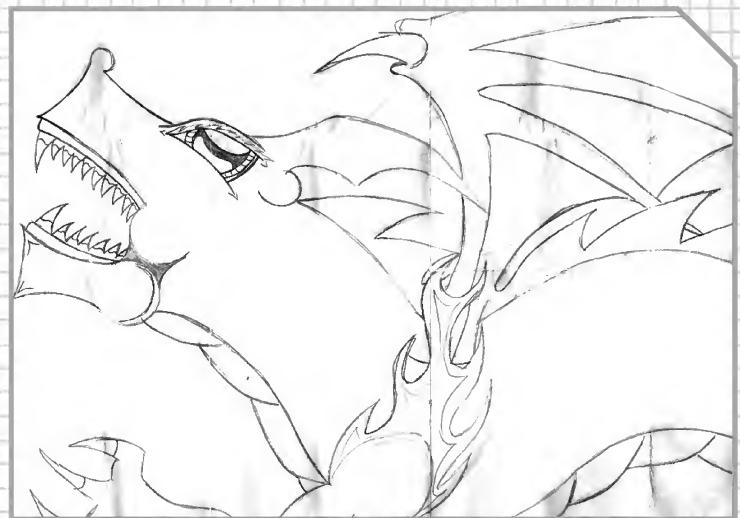
From The Beat: You should be out there with your friends and family, but if you go back to "doin' what you do" on the outs, will that just get you back inside again? Aren't you tired of the mess up, get arrested, go to juvy, the Ranch, get free, mess up...cycle?

Easier On The Outs

I think it is easier to live on the outs. I know that it's more crazier, but you are with your family and friends, and that makes it easier. Well, it makes it easier for me because when I'm with my family and friends, it makes me feel good because I just belong around them. It tells me now everything is all right

-Lua

From The Beat: We understand exactly what you mean. So what are you going to do (or not do) when you get out that will make sure you can stay out? (The Beat wants you to write just one topic, not all three. You have the ability to write a full page or more on any topic you choose, and that's what we'd like you to do. We are going to repeat this instruction in each of your three pieces!)



Politics Is Crazy!

It's yo' boy, Lil' Rob, up here at the Ranch, just chillin', ya dig? But, yeah, though, man. Politics is crazy! Prop 6, as you know, did not pass. Yea! Prop 6 was about raising taxes just so these weak ass police, sheriffs and correctional officers can get big pay! Why raise taxes and give the law big pay when they don't even do shhh? Well, I just wanted to share that it was good that it didn't pass, because these police don't deserve a penny, ya dig?

Man, I'm writing this Beat so all the ninjas and females that still want to be with that shhh, you gotta know (politics) shhh can really affect us if we don't pay attention to laws and propositions, ya dig? I know that if this Prop 6 was passed, it woulda been ugly out there, because moms and pops get higher taxes and police get fatta pockets for just drinking in them ugly ass (Crown Vics) sittin' all day and eatin' donuts and drinkin' nasty ass coffee!

If Prop 6 passed, it would've been ugly! They would of been more strict on gang crimes, which ain't coo'! All the law want to do is just constantly play ninjas for any lil' thing! So, chea, just make sure ya stay intact with politics. We all can suffer.

Well, Beat, all I want to say is, "Good! Prop 6 didn't pass." Until I touch down.

-Lil' Rob

From The Beat: It must be scary for young people who have been in gangs since they were really young to be facing higher and higher penalties for "gang-related activities." Someone on the radio said that all wars are really about people who feel threatened that their homes, turf, people are in danger of being destroyed. But some gang members have written that they enjoy the gang life, including the danger of the hunt for their enemies. What do you think being in a gang inspires in its members? If you belong to a crew in your neighborhood, what does it mean to you?

Stressing Over My Man

Damn Beat, lately I've been stressing out. I haven't talked to my man in a long time. He hasn't even written me.

I know me and him are not going to be together any longer. He got my name tatted on him and he told me that I'm gonna be like his tat - we're always gonna be together. Now that I think about all the things he told me, I realize that all of that shhh was nothing but words. I don't even know if we're still together.

My roommate told me that he's going to cheat on me. He probably doesn't want to be with me anymore or that he just can't be with me because I'm going to be locked up for a while.

Hopefully he would write me and let me know what's up. Well Beat its time for me to go late.

-Wondering

From The Beat: Before you let your roommate fill your head up with even more doubts, why don't you try to write him? Jumping to conclusions can sometimes be more harmful than anything else.

Running

When you run it's all good at first, but when you got things going for you, Karma gets you hard, and you lose everything you had.

-Junior

From The Beat: You talk about Karma - is there something you've done to people to make them run away from you? Did you chase them? Did you catch them? Maybe not physically, but how about emotionally - are you alienating your friends and family with your actions?

Charges Drop

I'm back in this hole for the sixth or seventh time. Well, I got up at the Motel 6 in Santa Clara on El Camino Real. I caught two new charges. One was lying to a peace officer and the second one was for sales with four pounds of some trees. But I didn't even go into court and my attorney had told me they dropped my charges. So Beat I'm glad that happened, now it's just VOP. I got to take it down, so much love and respect.

-Malae

From The Beat: Hmmm, for being in here for the sixth or seventh time for some pretty serious charges, you don't seem to be very concerned. Maybe instead of brushing it off, you should figure out how to avoid the eighth and ninth time. We know that it is important to keep your head up, but what's the difference between that and not caring?

Swallowing My Pride

I'm the type of person who has a lot for pride and even if I know I am wrong and the other person is right, I still won't let my pride down.

Lot's of times because of my pride I got in problems that were unnecessary. I still do to this day. I try to swallow my pride, but it's hard. I know someday, I'm going to need to swallow my pride even though I might not want to, like the situation I'm in right now.

When my mom comes to visit me, she tells me how I am feeling about this and even though it hurts because I'm not going to be with my family for a coo' min', I can't get what I want out because of my pride.

Well, the point that I'm trying to get down to is I can't let my pride down. And for those who are going to be locked up for awhile, stay up.

-Miranda

From The Beat: How do you think you can change this? In order to get over pride, you have to go deep and try to get to the root of that emotion. It might be one of the hardest challenges in your life. But, you know what? We know you can do it.

Locked Up

What's up, Beat? Well I'm gonna talk about being locked up.

Being locked up, well, it's not so bad - all these lame vatos complaining about that the hall is gay, the hall is gay. If you don't do shhh here, if you stress out, find something to do, so the time can go by faster and the hall is cool, but the thing that I look forward to every night is the letters - knowing that my familia is doing firme and the food is alright. You get to kick it with the homies, but the hall is not so bad, so you vatos complaining: shut up, but if you been here for a year or so then they have a reason why, but still ... they did the crime, so do your time, pues to all locked up, keep your heads up homies.

-Lil' Joker

From The Beat: So, by this we guess you have never once complained about being locked up? This is not how any young person should come up, and we bet your parents didn't plan this for you either. Nothing to brag about!

On Topic

Either way I think my life would be easy. There are a couple of things that make it hard in here and out there.

The hard thing about being in the hall is trying not to come back. The easy part is living the daily routine sleep eat and kick it. In here and out there.

-Darky

From The Beat: Sounds like trying not to come back to the hall would make it hard to be out of the hall. Maybe what's hard about being in the hall is not getting in trouble with the staff, too.

Danger

I can't believe I came back here. My mom is upset with me. I don't want them to send me somewhere far away. I will miss my mom, lil sis, and my man too much.

I just go my man's initials tattooed on my knuckles and a J on my ankle so we better be together forever. I love him to death. Can't wait to see him when I get out.

-Lil' Mama-B

From The Beat: Hmmm, survey says that getting a loved one's initials tattooed on your body in your teen years is not a guarantee that you'll stay together - actually, the opposite. But you can get it transformed into something else. Time now not to worry about him, but the time is to get your shhh together!

Fresh

I'm cool like fresh breeze,
fours sitting under me,
that's extra high because ya boy already six-foot-three.
I'm hanging where the stuff be,
EPA where we ride like a bus do,
roll down the window looking like chugga-chugga choo-choo,
I'm crispy KFC just taste me,
I'm dope shawty just pop me,
candy paint sweet like colla greens,
chilling in the south snacking on some frog meat
vaykay where the Yankees be,
6 tops 6 bottoms
same color as tweeta tweet,
catch me in the ville
and when you approach me, it's fresh capital F brodie.

-Brodie

From The Beat: It's always inspiring to hear some fresh rhymes coming from the units. Thanks for writing, we can hear the beats that go with this in our heads.

Thank You Gummy Bear

February 4th, 2007 was the day that Jesus gifted me with a blessing. Now, I noticed that I need nothing else but you in my life.

Now we're engaged and your gonna be my wife. We been through a lot like smiles and tears, and when your by my side, I ain't got no fears. I know I messed up by coming back here again and you're still by my side, that's why you're my best friend. No one could tell me different because I know you're faithful. You're waiting for my return and for that I'm thankful, so Rebecca, just remember that I love you hella much and I can't wait for that's day that I could feel your touch.

I miss your smile, I miss your kiss, I miss your hugs, and your lips. I miss those eyes, I miss your hands, but they're holding mines until the end. You're my friend and my lover and I got your back, you get mines covered. I'm so glad – your mine and I'm grateful and for your love I'm so thankful. Thank you baby for being by my side through thick and thin. I love you babe.

-Johnny

From The Beat: Johnny, this is pretty romantic and loving. It is so important to think of your lady as your friend, and you seem to have this down.

Wake Up

Wake up today
Don't make me pay
I don't know what to say

What do I do
Bring me to you
'Cause I know you feel my pain

Come back I yell
Don't go away
'Cause all I need is you today

Open your eyes
Hear the cries
See who dies

Wake up, wake up
Don't leave me to be
'Cause all I need is you to be with me

Live I yell
It's like I'm in a shell
'Cause I don't know if you're in hell

You can't see anything bright
You don't have a sight
You can't even see light

You said don't worry
I said I'm sorry
You said it was okay

It wasn't okay
Now I must pay
I don't know what to say

I love you
I don't know what to do
So now I just cry in vain

-Nadja

From The Beat: Another powerful poem about this horrific day in your life. Thank you for sharing.

Running

I ran from the girls ranch two years ago and when I ran, I went home. I created a whole bunch of problems.

I was running hard. I went from problem to problem. It was hard for me. My family in general is screwed up. So like it was crazy.

But during the last year I got jobs, one somewhere at Great America and then Subway. It was coo'. Then I got caught.

-Nena

From The Beat: It seems like you really were trying to get your life together by working, but you also see that running caused a lot of problems. If you could go back, do you think you would have just stayed at the Ranch?

Swallowing My Pride

Well it hasn't come yet, but it's about to. I got court soon and that's the big deal – I got a lot to lose. That's the day I got to swallow my pride.

My older sister is going to testify against me and it hurts me to see her do that and I hate it.

Man, I ain't tryn to swallow my pride. It kills me. It really does. And then after I heard that my brother today got locked up for the same shhh I did and I'm hella sad.

-Nena

From The Beat: This family drama is really complicated. Do you think you can forgive your sister? It seems like your heart is big enough to do so.

Thank You

Allow me to extend my utmost love and respect to all my family.

Firstly, I want to thank the most important and most brilliant person in my life, which is my loving mom. Through thick and thin she has stuck by my side. Makes me wonder how she's still proud I'm her son. I've put her through so much and now I am very remorseful. I wish I could go back and change everything, but I can't. So from now on, my life is going to turn around and I'm going down a different path. Not just for my mom, but for myself, too.

Upon my release things are going to change for the better. For now I'm just going to do my program and get out of here as soon as possible and get back to my family and close friends. To all homeboys, stay up, do your time, get out, and live your life happy.

-Anthony

From The Beat: You can't go back in time, but you can always go forward and that's the most important thing. But in this piece, you are talking about changing "for your mother" but real change must come for yourself. Either way, sounds like you are on the right path.

Swallowing Your Pride

Well staying here in the hall is hard and you always have to do stuff that you are told to do and it sucks. The same thing every day and it gets boring just doing it. But hey you have to swallow your pride and keep going.

One thing I hate most is taking it down right back to my room where everything is silent and boring. That's when I really swallow my pride. I hate it and I really get in a rage but there is nothing that I could do. So I just stay quiet and stay calm so nothing could happen.

-Jimmy

From The Beat: Keeping your emotions in check is a good skill to have in a place like this. Think about the consequences if you didn't swallow your pride when the staff told you to take it down. It could only make things worse.

Run For Your Life!!!

I ran on October 9th and I came back October 19th, so I think it's not worth it to run because you just funning from your problems and you could just pick up more time.

I ran because I was bored and I had to do it as a juvenile because in prison it's gonna be a little harder.

-Pecas

From The Beat: Being a juvenile means you get a lot of breaks from the justice system, but don't think that's going to help you out when you become an adult. If you get locked up as an adult, that will haunt you for the rest of your life. Don't do anything stupid, man.

The Act Of Violence

Violence is around everywhere. People think violence can go away, but it can't and won't. As long as there are stupid people on the streets, those stupid people are going to be victims of violence.

Some people are just hella stupid. They want to be up here, acting like they know where they're at, but they are just see-through like plastic. So as long as there is plastic around there will always be violence.

-Lomeli

From The Beat: We like your analogy of see-through, plastic people. But how can society change to help these people become more solid? And how can you avoid these plastic people?

Easier Doesn't Mean Better

I think life in the hall is easier but easier doesn't mean better. I'd rather be on the outs and making my own decisions even though it's harder. It's also kind of hard in here because you have to be told what to do everyday and you can't just go home when you're tired of it.

-Josh

From The Beat: Easier definitely doesn't mean better. If it did, we wouldn't have the free will to make choices, and then what would we be? Choice is how some people define humanity. Without choice, they say, we are no better than animals.

Missing You

I know I messed up by leaving you again...and losing you to this place. I regret all that shhh. If I had the choice now, I would've stayed home that day. Now I'm racing YA alternative with two strikes. I'm hoping for life skills.

Babe, I'm missing you sooo much, you're my lover, my best friend, you're my other half! I'm just glad I know you're gonna stay by my side. And no one can tell me different. We've been through a lot of stuff too sweetie, and like you said, "This is like a nightmare, but all nightmares gotta come to an end." I love you so much and I can't wait until we walk the aisle. I'm missing you so much too, Gummy Bear.

This is a pain that cannot be healed. But when you write, and when I call you, I feel really better. Babe, I just want to come home to you. I want to thank you for being there for me 100 percent. You've been my best friend. I aint got no friends. I got homeboys, but you're my everything. Just remember sweetie, I'm missing you until the day I come home to you!

To all those who are incarcerated and missing their other half, keep your heads up. If it's true love, you'll be back to your lover sooner or later!

- Johnny

From The Beat: Another loving piece about your friend/lady. It is hard when we pin a lot of our "being good" on another person. You gotta want to change for your own freedom, and not "do it" for another person.

In Loving Memory

Speedie, it wasn't right that you left us so early. It wasn't your time to go. We need you the most right now. You've been on our mind lately. I know we miss you so truly right now.

There's a question I wanted to ask you! If you can take back time would you?

Man, Speedie I would of hustled a ride to swoop you up if I knew you were going to do this. Man Speedie, you were solid. Doing what you were doing.

Well, hopefully your watching over us and guiding us to the right path. Well try to remember us like we remember you.

We even made a sick song for you it goes like this:

Chorus: In loving memory of the homie Speedie, just chillin' like a G boy, rest in peace.

Anyway, you are above the stars. Never forget that a fallen solider is never forgotten, relax in paradise. Speedie, we miss you truly! You only have one life.

-Nena

From The Beat: The love you have for this friend is very strong. Thank you for sharing and reminding everyone how precious life is.

2008 And The Election

So what's crackin'? I heard Obama won. I also heard he will be inaugurated next year at the beginning of '09. It sounds cool and all. It seems like a big step that an African American has been elected President.

I believe we should have a Mexican president next.

A lot of people say Obama will be assassinated. I honestly don't think he will, unless he were to do something stupid. Why would they try to kill Obama? Even though throughout the US there are 30,000 KKK members. I'm pretty sure one of those individuals would want to be known as "the one who shot Obama!"

As far as the presidency goes, I believe that the cards are dealt so now we have to wait and see how they will be played. He won't get killed unless he does something stupid.

- Lomeli

From The Beat: You are right, there are a lot of people who would like to go down in history for murdering Obama. That's so scary, but hopefully the secret service will come through.

Running

Through out my life I've always been running from my problems. What I found out is that running never got me nowhere except juvenile hall.

In the meantime, it seems like my problems are gone only for the moment. My motto used to be 'I live for the moment and not the future.' So why not live it to the fullest right? That saying is true.

What I found out is that all my problems I've been running away from all add up at the end. What I do every moment of my life effects my future.

My mom says just do the programs my PO gives me and get it over and done with so I don't have to worry about it later.

The OG's even tell me to handle business. There's no use running if there's always going to be something waiting for you around the corner. As much as I hate to admit it, they're right. That's all I got for right now.

-Victoria

From The Beat: So, does this mean you are ready to let the moment go? We think you can still "live for the moment" and not get in so much trouble.

Thinking Of You

Hello Beat Within it's me Stackz! It's my second time in here, I got VOP, so I guess I'm going to the ranch I'm just going to save it out.

I understand the consequences of my actions and what I have done so I just want to do my time and get on with my life. I have a lady on the outs that I truly care about so I wrote this poem for her so I would feel grateful if you put it out there it's called...

"Thinking Of You"

I'm just sitting in my cell
Thinking of you about how the way you kiss me and call me your boo
I'm just mad as hell
When I get out only months can tell
I miss you so much
What I would do to feel your touch
I tried to tell you this day would come
That I would get locked for the crime I have done
But the truth is I want to stay with you
'Cause the feelings you show to me seem faithful and true
They got your baby right before his birthday
It's okay, having you as my girl is the biggest present anyway
I hope you stay as strong as I do
Everyday that goes by I say I miss you
just stay with me through this issue
And together baby we can make it through

-Stackz

From The Beat: These are some beautiful words! We're sure that your girl will love them, because they come from the heart. She will be the motivation to set your life straight when you get out, and you two can enjoy the time you have together.

How I Feel

What's up everybody this is Mark from San Jose life on the out is better for me because I can be with my family and I don't have to sit in a cell all day.

Well right now I might go to the ranch, I hope I do, because my PO is trying to send me out of state to a placement.

When I get out I am going to do good get a job and get off probation well I'm going to cut this short late.

-Mark

From The Beat: Some of our writers have told us that the ranch is difficult to deal with because the access to drugs is easier, and there's always the temptation to run away. If you go to the ranch, keep in mind how difficult it is to live in the hall, and remind yourself that soon you'll be back with your family.

SEQ CHAPTER 1 Running From My Problem

Q-vole Beat, well this is Sparky from San Jose once again just chilling doing my time. When I run from my problems I deal with it by smoking bud or crystal meth but when I'm not high I got to deal with my problem.

I also run from my program so I could go kick it with the homies. I get all mess up when I smoke that shhh. It mess your head up and then I get locked up for smoking or for gangs related stuff. I also run from police when they start to chase me with their stupid dog.

-Sparky

From The Beat: It sounds like running from your problems hasn't helped you out very much. Smoking to escape from life only gets you locked up, and running from your programs does, too. It's time to face your problems and solve them so that they don't keep chasing you through life.

I'm Not Gang Related

Before I start I want to tell you that I'm hella mad 'cause you guys never put my name Blue in, and next time you guys take out my name I'm not going to write in The Beat anymore.

Well the reason why they call me Blue it's because I have blue eyes. So I don't want you guys to think that it's gang related.

- Blue

From The Beat: OK, first and last time your name will be in The Beat. Come on, can't you see how your nickname could be construed as gang-related? And how do we know your not? Even if people here in the hall know why your nickname is Blue, what about people in other counties or states who don't know you? What do you think they'll assume when they see your name? Remember, we are guest of the system and we have to be careful.

Life

I think life is what you make of it. It could be hard or easy. It could be the same on the outs. It's mainly how you look at the cards you are dealt up. If you're always looking at the bad side of things and blaming other people, then your time is going to be hard. If you look at the better side of things, it will be easier. Well, thanks for listening Beat.

- Complicated Mind

From The Beat: There are some people who def. always have the "glass is half empty" vibe on life. But how do we convert the world to see the better side of things?

Who Am I

They call me no good for nothing
I'm always huffing and puffing
About to get into something
This gangster is bumping it
Grumpy is not the foe to be screwing with
Will ignite it like dynamite
my gangsters are automatically my pistol
It isn't no stopping me
I put the chronic in a bold take
Pulled like a mystery
I'm a gangster
I'm a rebel
I'm an angel
I'm the devil
I'm on this side
I'm on that side
Do you see me all depressed
Do you see me smoking stress
Do you see a grumpy bless
I was never nothing more
I was never nothing less
put my life on The Beat
coming straight from the street
take a toast to the very utmost
weed it weed it
I'm gonna get you blow homegrown
All my new row dogs know
that I give it all I got
always blowing out the spot on the dot
everytime I'm puffing on it when I'm blowing out the chronic

-Grumpy

From The Beat: "They" call you a gangster for a good reason, if what you write about is true. But is that what you want them to call you? On the streets it may be worth something, but that's not a word you want to hear from a judge, or from a boss, or from your children. Nothing to brag about. Ask the homies doing life in the pen youngster! Think of some other labels you can stick on yourself, labels that can help you.

Swallowing Your Pride

Well, damn, what can I say about swallowing my pride? Well, shhh, damn, well...

I put my pride to the side when my lady told me some bullshhh. She told me she hated me and that she regretted being with me well, I put my pride to the side and was willing to play the fool for her just to do what was better instead of just saying, "Forget this girl," and go off and start cussing and yelling at her. I stayed quiet, hugged her, told her not matter what, we were always gonna be together, even though she talked shhh. She didn't want to be with me, but I still wanted to be by her side because I was willing to play the fool.

But now it's out of my hands. She made a decision to be single, and I can't do shhh but play the fool of a heartbroken man. Well, all I can say is forget the world and the system, and hope to get out and see her and have her stock jocking me more. I wish she should've waited. She doesn't know I got a shorter sentence and I'ma be out soon, sooner than she thought. But I rather not tell her and make her feel dumb.

Well, I love you, Chubs, always and forever. 1/24/08 is the best day of my life, and it always will be.

-Flea

From The Beat: It's hard to know which of you made the choice to be single. After all, whatever got you into this place put your relationship at risk. You chose to do something that was more important to you than she was, and as a result, you gave the system power to take you away. So, who decided to be single first? This may not be the consequence you wanted, but you still must live with the consequences that you set in motion.

Responsibility

Life on the outs is hard in many ways because I have a lot of responsibility, like taking care of my 10-month-baby, and providing for him and my future wife, and to be on the run and try to do everything I can for them was hard, but I was being successful until I got locked up.

They pulled me away from them, being here is so hard for me emotionally. I can't take the stress that I go through in here, being away from them. I love my family, and will be with them soon; til then, I love you, both my babies.

-Drifter

From The Beat: You seem to be stuck between a rock and a hard place, as they say. You complain about the stress on the outs, but also about the stress of being locked up. Which is worse?

"They see me calling they hating"

Hey what's up Beat! Today is my second time in here. I just want to say what's up to all who know me and today I will be writing about running.

Running is a coward's "I walk away," but I wish I never ran from when I was trying to drift up the mountain, because when I jumped out I got all kinds of cuts. That was fun 'cause I was just happy to be driving.

I told my boy to give me the beer and he didn't want to give me the 40oz, so I got mad and I gave him a dead leg and then he gave it to me and when he did we crashed and I jumped out and when I did he started to scream, "help me" and that was so cool.

-S

From The Beat: Hey, S, what was cool? When you were driving drunk, when you hurt yourself, or when your actions hurt your friend? Because we don't mean to sound like total squares—and we know that sometimes we do—but none of that sounds very cool to us. How did running get you into the situation you describe here? Do you have any perspective on the situation now?

"High Speeding"

Well, I'm writin' about running from the cops. It was last summer, I was with Lil' L, Chango, Payaso, and Mike—we were all going in the Toyota Camry around the corner to smoke a blunt, and we all hopped in the car and then we drove to the corner and an undercover cop pulled right next to us, so we kept driving and then he put the lights on and I put the pedal to the metal and took off.

The cop hella sucked at driving and I smoked him, so I stopped to wait for him and we were talking shhh to him, and then I took off and passed the park and then we kept going and I told the homeboys that were gonna hop out.

Well I jumped out while the car was moving and no one else jumped out and the car hit a pole and then the other homeboys jumped out but one of my cousins got caught. We ran through the creek. The helicopter came, as we ran through the water and got away. We smoked the blunt while we were running too.

My cousin snitched and we still didn't get caught but they raided all our pads. Then I got caught two months later and went to the ranch and some detective came and interviewed me and I was supposed to come to court but did not.

Well, that's all, much love to all...

-Soldier

From The Beat: This is definitely a great example of how sometimes running gets you into way more trouble than staying might have—thanks for your honesty and detail. How do you feel about the whole episode now? Do you think you might react differently if you had the chance to do it all over? Also, why did you feel like you had to challenge

Forget Barack Obama!

Wow Dawg, how in the world did Obama get elected as president? Well, I don't like this one bit. Everybody gonna try to go hyphy and grow some dreads and go dumb like Mac Dre. To tell the truth, I was hoping that the white vato would've won the election.

I guess we are just gonna have to wait and see what this black president is about to do. Well, I'm pretty mad about this, so I'm gonna stop writing. All right then, late.

-Temper

From The Beat: What are your real reasons for not wanting Obama to win? We know you can't be serious about the dreads and going hyphy, so is it because of his race? His age? What did you hope the white guy would do as president that you don't expect the black guy to do? When you're 18, do you plan on registering to vote?

Life

What's up Beat? Well I just want to write about how life is. It's crazy if you just kick back in your room and trip out how life is out there.

Just think about all this depredation happening in our communities but we're too caught up in the things that we do to even think about how our families are doing. But maybe one day we'll realize. But until then we're still ignoring everything life has to offer and just looking at the liquor stores on every corner buying the three 40 oz. for five bucks.

Well I can't really think right now because there's hella noise so I'm getting distracted so I'm 'bout to be out and keep it you know what I'm saying so I'm out late!

-Mullen

From The Beat: Looking ahead to the future is the mark of a wise person. While most of humanity is captivated by their televisions and their petty problems, a magnificent world passes them by. Don't think that life is passing you by in the hall, though, because even in here you are still living.

Thank You Baby

I thank you, baby, for all of your love and sacrifices that you have done for me.

Baby, you love me like no other and I wish I could stand by your side.

I thank you for my pride and joy and my everything: my beautiful baby boy Xavier, both of you will always be by my side and always in my heart.

There will never be no other for me but you.

Nothing in the world can separate us, baby.

We are stuck with one another and I know that you're hurt,

because I'm not there to help you or hold you when you're down or to support you.

Babe, well know this: that no matter what, we're still in each others hearts and I'm here for you, maybe not by your side, but I'm here and you're always here for me too

and I admire your love for me.

Baby, we've been through so much together you know that this is another bump in the road for us just like you said

mamas, but don't worry because I'm ok and we'll be reunited again someday

and it will be very soon. So don't you worry, and Xavier baby - he means the world to us and I thank you once again for him and for being a good mother,

even though people say we're too young to be parents but we're grown adults of our own and we're very good and we're committed

to our baby boy that always puts a smile on our face when we're down and makes us feel proud and happy and baby,

no matter what we will always be together because our love is like no other and baby,

we have a good family bond - so thank you, baby, for everything in the world.

-Edward

From The Beat: Well, you use the word "baby" some 11 times in this piece - perhaps next time you should consult a thesaurus. But you do seem really dedicated to your "babies" - both the lady and the son - so we wish you luck sticking to your commitment.

Life On The Outs Versus Life In Here

Ey, what up Beat? How you people doing? Anyways, let me start this topic by saying that life is easier in the hall than in the outs. I say this 'cause being here you don't have to be watching over your shoulders from being hot or getting stabbed by your enemigas. Someone may think different than me, but I don't care what they say.

All I know is that I been here for a while, so I like it here better than in the outs 'cause I don't have to listen to my stupid baby's mama talking mad shhh to me. All I miss is the drugs, the homies and the jainas. Besides all that, I'm firme. If I had all that up in here, shhh, I would love to live here my whole life.

Well, anyways, tha's about it for now. So to all out there, keep your heads up and don't let that stress get to you camaradas. Orale pues. Alrato from that Big Temps.

-Big Temps

From The Beat: Do you know what we find most disappointing about this piece? You wrote about how you miss drugs, homies, females — and how you DON'T miss your baby's mama — but you never mentioned caring at all for that baby! If you really are responsible for bringing a baby into the world, then this is proof that you are not responsible enough to be a father. Everything you wrote focuses on you and what you want, but not a thought for anyone else — not for a family that has sacrificed for you and not for a baby that you should be sacrificing for.

Animal

I want to write about my baby's mamma, but I'm not sure because she did me dirty. I went to her pad to see her, because I knew that I was getting locked up soon. I asked her if she'd write me. And she said, if I would give her stamps, she would write me. And then we got into a big argument over sitting on the couch.

What happen was that I said, "You can put your legs on me, I'm not gonna bite." The mom's boyfriend got up and told me I was disrespectful, I looked up to my girl and asked if I was disrespectful and she said no. I asked if she wanted me to stay and she said no. So I packed up. Three days later I'm locked up, writing in bed.

- Whose disrespectful?

From The Beat: Sometimes being around family makes things stressful. Don't be mad at her about that. Just write her and tell her you're thinking about her — which you obviously are — and she'll write back.

Which Is Easier, Life On The Outside Or Life In Here

Today topics are whack so I'm gonna just pick the first one. I think in some way it is easier being locked up because we are in a controlled environment and we don't got much access to drugs or weapons and if we screw up in here they take all our free time away but being on the out is way better.

-Shackleton

From The Beat: This is a good start, but we'd love to see you write something more unique to you—what's hard about life in the inside (or outside) for you, specifically? Who do you miss? What do you love about life on the outside, and what makes it worth never getting locked up again—for you?

Running

I ran from something that was really bothering me, and that was when I was on house arrest. I ran even though I had the bracelet on, until I got caught days later because I got stopped by a cop and they locked me up. I knew that was gonna happen, but before that happen I made sure I had hella fun and I did. I hated bottling like four times a week, so I just got locked up and will do the rest of my time in here.

-Squeeks

From The Beat: What exactly was bothering you? Just being bottled four times a week? Isn't sleeping in your own bed better than being in here?

Running

What's hating, Beaters? This the leader of yo' life once again on the Jailhouse Daily News, and I'm telling you about the time I was runnin' from my Mama.

I was 11 years old, and I blew a bag of some George Cannon in the house when she was gone for work.

When she got back home, she opened the door yellin, "Lil Mike!" (for y'all that don't know me, I looked out the window) then got Air Jordan winded in the air, and kept it movin' like crack, feel me? 'Cause that was back when getting a whoopin' was in. Ya dig me?

Then Moms caught Lil' Mikey on the rebound, then gave me the AT&T connection, and socked me in the snot box. That's when I got tired of runnin' and start dealin' with the consequences. Ya dig me?

- Pay Me

From The Beat: This is quite a moralistic lesson that you got going on here. A lot of you talk about dealing with the consequences but what about a preemptive strike on the consequences altogether?

My Girl's Trippin'

Q-vole Beat and Beat readers it's Lil' G. Well damn my hyna's hella tripping on me, she found out that I was cheating on her. Well I told her that I wasn't really cheating because it's over a piece of paper, but it's all good.

-Lil' G

From The Beat: Even if you think it's not a big deal, she will see things differently, so don't just brush her feelings off like they are nothing. Check yourself lil' homie.

Which is Easier

Hey what's up Beat, this is Brazwell from Gilroy. Well I'm writing about which is easier, life on the outs or life in here. I think life in here is a whole lot easier because you don't have access to drugs or alcohol. Life on the outs is a lot better because you have more freedom.

-Brazwell

From The Beat: We hear this from a lot of you guys—that life on the inside is tough, but that it keeps you away from things that tempt you on the outside. Freedom is a conflicted thing. When you say that life on the inside is easier, do you mean that you prefer it? Do you think that you could learn to enjoy the freedom of the outside world without endangering yourself or others?

Broken Promise

Damn! I'm sitting in this horrible place writing in The Beat, hella mad no one will understand me. I got my sentencing. I got sentenced to the Ranch. Well, before that, I was in the hall for three months. For those three months I had a letter every day from my lady. I was so happy because she made me feel like she was it for me. We were gonna be together forever.

She told me she wasn't gonna let nothing get between us. She was a liar because when she found out I was gonna do some time in the Ranch, she tells me that she can't wait for me, that she can't take it no more. She says I don't understand.

What is there to understand? She lied to me and she can't be there for me. The way I see it is that I'm inhere hurtin', going crazy thinking of who she's with, who's taking my spot. I think about it and I'm done with this love bullshhh. Can't wait to get out, move from my problems and let her live her life. If she can't be here for me in my bad times, she don't deserve to see me on my good days. I'ma prove to myself I can get better and find myself a better loving woman to be with. So I hope she does move on and find some good for her because seeing her happy is all I ever wanted, but with me. But now I hope someone else can.

Damn! The sad part is that I'm only gonna do six months, and she can't wait. She told me we were gonna be together, and that we were promised. Now, I just think and know that we're just a broken promise. I really wish we could've worked it out. Well, unlike her, I can't just forget about someone I love. Al I can say is know n gonna do what I do in your heart. Like a home girl told me, you lost something good.

-Flea

From The Beat: First, could we ask you to put periods at the end of your sentences? You wrote this whole page with only one period at the very end! But second, we believe there is something you haven't understood, especially when you ask, "What's to understand?" It's just this: She didn't leave you, you left her! You chose to do something that took you away from her and then expected her to wait for you until... when? How long should she wait? If the shoe was on the other foot, would you wait for her, remain faithful to her? For how long? We know you weren't thinking about losing her when you did whatever you did, but that's exactly the problem. That was the time to remember how much you love her, and to stop yourself from risking losing her. We know you didn't want this consequence, but it comes with the territory.

In Here

Which is easier life on the outs or life in here
I think life in here is very easy 'cause
They get you out of trouble and it's better
In here 'cause you're not doing drugs
No more and the good thing about here
Is that you get school credits easy in here
But it is still better outside
'Cause you have your freedom

- Detainee

From The Beat: What is freedom worth to you? We hear from a lot of you writers that life on the inside is easier, but life on the outside is better. Sure, having three meals a day, a roof over your head, school credits, and no access to drugs or alcohol make juvie easier than life on the streets in some ways—but what is it that makes life on the outside worth living?

"I Can't Breathe!"

"I can't breathe!" Croaked the hoarse voice from under the bag. William tightened his grip and felt the body go slack. He removed the bag and stared at the disfigured face. William collected the radio from his belt and made his way into the prison yard.

-AnonymousOne

From The Beat: Harsh. Hey, now that you are gone, we hope to see your words in print on the outside someday.

My Life

Life was easy on the outside, because you get freedom and see your loved ones.

To see family is especially hard when you're locked up and you don't know what's happening on the outside. It's hard to stay off drugs, and off cigarettes 'cause they're addicting.

Life in here gives you no freedom, only a little bit of playing time, and you have to follow rules, and wear the same clothes every day. You miss your family, you don't know, like, when your homie's outside in the street and you are locked up he can get shhh and you don't even know because you're in here doing time. Next time I'll think twice before getting in here and doing good.

-Alex

From The Beat: It sounds like life on the inside is wearing you down, but stay strong and keep thing about that last sentence—about how next time, you'll think twice about doing something that could get you locked up again.

To My Brothers

Q-vole? This that one and only mobster Nightmare coming at you straight from the max. Well, I'm not feeling these gacho topics, so I'm going to write about my brothers, you know who you are.

Keep yourselves strong-minded. All we have in here is each other to depend on. I encourage each of us to fight this corrupted system. Keep those chins up, brothers. They can't keep us down. We're too strong for that. The DA, judge, and whoever wants to hate, let them, because the truth is they'll never be able to walk in our shoes I'm here for you, brothers. It's us against the world.

-Nightmare

From The Beat: Do you honestly think you could walk in our shoes? Of course not! No one can really walk in another's shoes, be in another's skin. But where does that get us? Nowhere! As long as you see the world this way — us against them — you will always be on the outside looking in (or, as now, on the inside looking out). You don't need DAs and judges hating on you because the hate you have for each other ('rivals') will allow those at the top to sit back and smile and let you do all the dirty work. You're right about one thing, though. They can't keep you down. Only you can do that!

Life In Here

What up Beat? Well I think life in here is easier 'cause in here I could graduate 'cause they make you go to school, and on the outs I never go to school and when I do I get straight F's. I'm always getting high.

-Creeper

From The Beat: Hopefully, going to school in the hall will instill a habit in you so that when you get out you'll find it easier to go to class and graduate. As for getting high, you'll regret these choices down the road, especially if it is messing with your education.

Which Is Easier?

Hey Beat readers what's cracking? This is Lil' Man once again. Well today I am going to write about which life is easier. The life on the outside is so much easier because you have more freedom and you can do whatever whenever.

-Lil' Man

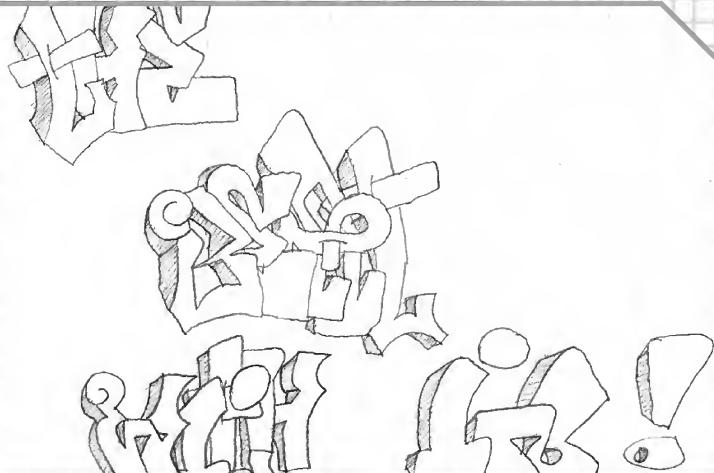
From The Beat: Is freedom an easy gift to deal with? Sometimes having some guidance and instruction makes life easier. If you can do whatever whenever, how do you know what is the right thing to do?

This Love

I may be away but I'm sure...
Even when we're far apart
Distance can never change
The love I have for you in my heart...
Thinking about my baby Kimberly! Love you.

-Gustavo

From The Beat: Way to drop a rhyme, Gustavo—and between you and us, girls love guys who write poetry. When you think about Kimberly, what do you think about? What kind of person does she want you to be, and what kind of person does she make you want to become?



Running And Hiding

Me and one of my friends had to run from the cops and hop a barbwire fence, and he got cut on one arm.

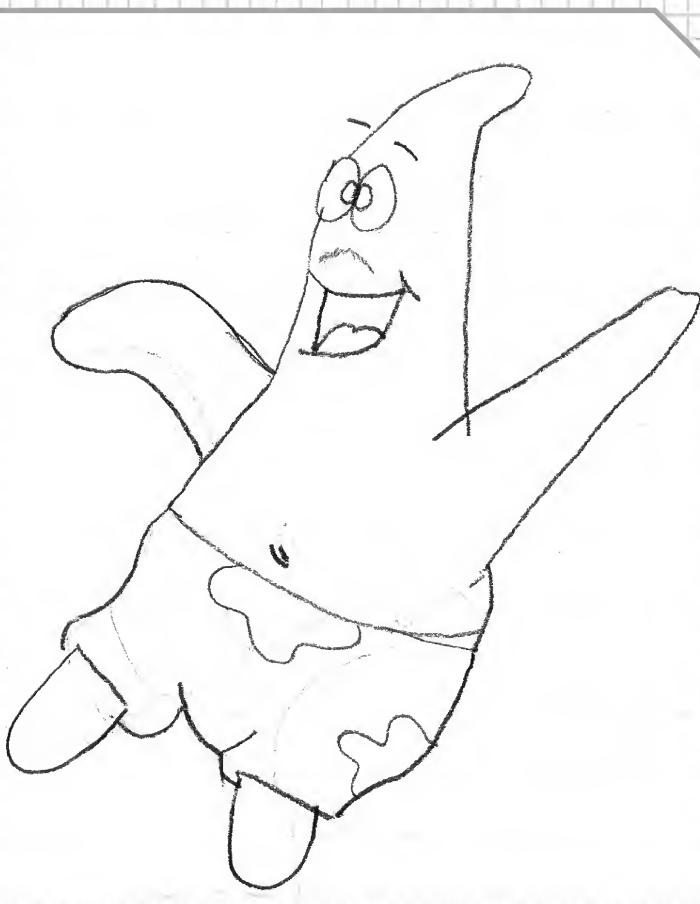
It's easier in here than on the outs because there's nothing in here to smoke or drink.

It's hard on the outs 'cause I have a lot of homies and we always chill and drink pisto and smoke bomb 'cause that's our fun, we like doing that.

When me and my bro ran there were hella ghetto birds and cop cars trying to get us so we had to sleep under a creek for a couple days and be on the low-low. We had two bills so we were able to buy stuff and we still smoked bomb and drank pisto.

-Young Runner

From The Beat: What we hear you saying in this piece is that smoking and drinking sometimes influence you to do things that you wouldn't do if you weren't drunk and high. We at The Beat totally understand the need to relax and tune out sometimes, but do you think there's a way to do it without drugs or alcohol? You yourself said that it's easier on the inside with nothing to smoke or drink—but life on the outside doesn't have to include those things either. Do you think you might make different, or better, choices if you decided to leave smoking and drinking behind?



My Lady

Well today I'm not feeling this topic so I'm going to write about my lady. Well she's my everything. She's half my world and all my heart.

Let me tell you how I met her. Cruising por la calle when I saw this beautiful hina that was waving at me. So I decided to go to her and ask her name. She answered Gilary. And the weird thing was that her name sounded familiar to me. I was right because when I got home I called my friend Samuel and told him about this hina, and I told him her name he asked me how she looked and I told him, so he went to my house and asked me to go with him to his girlfriend's house.

When he got there, the hina was there, the girl I met. And the thing that shocked me was that Gilary and my friend's girlfriend were cousins. So since that day me and him were going cruising with our girlfriends everywhere.

-JOSE
From The Beat: You really let us in to your how-we-met story, Jose, and we think it's a beautiful one. Call us crazy, but we were intrigued by your use of the word "hina," and wondered where it came from. Turns out that "Hina" (literally, "girl") is the name of several goddesses and women in Polynesian mythology, and Hina is often associated with the moon, death, and rebirth. How has your Hina helped you rebirth yourself—emerge into a new mindset, or see the world in a different light? What would you say to Gilaray if you could talk to her right now, and what kinds of changes does she inspire you to want to make in your life?

Police

What's good, Beat? Now today I'm gone talk about the police. Man, I hate the police. They always doin' something. When I walk down the street, they always stop me and ask my name, knowing damn well they know my name.

They always call my PO and tell him that I'm out late, stay hating on a player—that's why I hate the police. Forget the cops.

-W

From The Beat: Some police may know you by your name, but, remember, they often deal with a whole lot of people, and in order not to disrespect you by calling you the wrong name or embarrass you by knowing you by your name when you're with somebody else, maybe they hesitate to what you could consider calling you out by using your name.

Free To Do What You Want

I'm eat good food when I get out and kick it with my family. It's easier on the outs, but you can get in trouble if you slip up. It's also better on the outs, too, because you're free to do what you want.

-Young Smurf

From The Beat: Nothing's better than being able to do what you want, right? Do you trust yourself to stay out of trouble on the outs? What will be your biggest challenge to your keeping your precious freedom?

This Cell Is Making Me Crazy

Livin' here isn't my biggest nightmare
But being in a cell for almost all day
Can make a person kind of crazed.
I lived, loved and strived to change
But no matter what
I seem to always have those chains
That chain me down
And bring me back to the hall.

-Chains

From The Beat: What is it on the outs that is so irresistible that it continues to bring you back into juvy? Isn't that the real chain that drags you down? If you need some kind of help, maybe counseling, to manage whatever it is on the outs, can you talk to the med tec in juvy, or someone you trust, and set yourself up for it now? It's a sign of strength, not weakness, to get the help you need.

Runnin' Home

I was up in Santa Cruz at this placement called PCYH. They did ninjas grimey up there. My county gave me \$600 to spend on clothes and they only bought me, like, five things, and told me I was runnin' out of money. But what made me run was I called my ninja, Bam-Bam's phone, and some beezies answered and told me he got shot.

At first I didn't believe it, but then it hit me, "That ninja do stay on some stupid shhh," so I ran, caught two busses to San Jose, then the Caltrans to the SCO (San Francisco,) then I got a ride to the jungle (Marin City.) I saw my ninja and he was in good health. I was happy, but mad, 'cause I ran from my program, but ayy, that's my ninja and I ride wit' my ninjas.

Anyway, that's it, all gas, no breaks, yee! I was on everything when I was on the run—delsym and patron, yee! Xanax, promethazine, codeine, and ecstasy. Yup, I'm an addict.

-J Mak

From The Beat: It's understandable that you panicked when you heard your homie had been shot. Do you know now if and why that beezie was playing with you on the phone? You sound like you were thinking about running anyway. Instead of continually messing up, getting arrested, go to juvy, group homes, how are you going to get yourself a whole new life that doesn't include anything illegal? Can you make it in the real world without drugs? You have to want change, we hope you do!

Don't Play Me

Boys try to play you
And lay you
They say they love you
Just to get you
All they want to do
Is mess with you
After a while
They leave you
Mistreat you
And talk about you
I told a boy I love him
And he said it back
Then started messin' wit' my cousin
Behind my back
I thought he loved me
Until he got locked up
I seen him
And he acted stuck up

Just so you know
I really do love you
So when you're in placement
I'ma hold it down for you
You can write me if you want to
If not, I won't judge you
I just wanna let you know
I still love you

-Fly Gutta

From The Beat: You're right, there are boys who only, or principally, have your body on their minds. But now that you know that, how can you protect your heart and body from being fooled and abused by young men like this guy? As painful as it's going to be, can you accept that since he snubbed you in juvy, you should take his insincerity seriously and know that he doesn't really want or deserve your heart?

*You can write me if you want to
If not, I won't judge you
I just wanna let you know
I still love you*

While In Fresno

While I was in Fresno, I wanted to get put in the set, because where I am from, homies disrespect other homies, always lying, hating and stealing, and always talking trash. So I met some homeboys in this school. These homies showed nothing but respect and love to other homies, and were ready to put it down for their set, so I told the homie that I wanted to get put in, so the homie told some other homies, and they said, "Yea," and there I was, set to the (crew), so then I got put in, showing nothing but loyalty an' (no) fear to enemies I had in their heart, 'cause I ain't no punk. Never ready to punk down to no one, 'cause that's how I was raised up, 'cause I never had a father.

-Baby P

From The Beat: So that's how you joined your crew in Fresno. Your writing inspired a topic we at The Beat used to encourage young people to write about how it was for them, what was in their mind, their expectations, when they joined a gang/crew/hood. Are your homies there for you now, since you've moved to Marin, and are in juvy?

Good Can Arise From What Society Says Is Bad

Have you ever wondered who decided what was right and wrong? I realize the major shhh is obvious, but what about the smaller things that don't hurt people unless you do it wrong? That actually help people in a lot of ways...

Society puts certain things as bad and good, but are not even aware of some of the good that rises out of the so-called bad. People seem to judge things they never even experienced, so how if they never experienced it, could they label it? How can they say something is bad because of one bad story?

-Oo

From The Beat: What are you alluding to when you write about something that you, or at least some people do, that society deems wrong, but good arises out of it? Whether or not you indulge in it, why don't you give The Beat real examples of how you think society is narrow-minded in its judgments, without really experiencing them first-hand?



Obama 2008

When Obama became President I was very happy, because not only is he white, but he's black, too. I also like his points—how he want to get more jobs to help more middle and lower class people. This world is going to be so much better.

I can't wait to get out, to get a job, and now that's he's (about to be) President, it makes me really want to get out and get a job.

-Hot Boy

From The Beat: Yes, if Obama can become president, you know that with hard work and some little help, you also may be able to accomplish anything you want. Go for it! What kind of work do you want to do?

I'm Outta Here

Hey, what's up?

Goodbye, I'm outta here
Never to tread the juvenile halls again.
Forever I will stay on the outs
Living life on life's terms
Running the world and the streets
Peace out
See y'all when I'm rich and famous

-Lil' Deezy

From The Beat: When you're out of high school, maybe before you go to college, why don't you roam the world, especially if you really want to see life on its own terms? Work your way around the world.

Toys

What's good, Beat? Well, I've been locked up damn near all of 2008 and it pisses me off when I read about kids writing about graffiti. All you toys need to know is that POs read this and y'all stupid enough to put yo' name after saying you ain't gonna stop. Now they gonna watch you, even after you're out. I just wanted to get that off my chest and my advice to you toys is—quit! I'm just a graffer comin' outta Richmond. Don't sleep.

-Kool Aid

From The Beat: You have a point, maybe it is better for everyone to keep his/her business to him/herself. What graffiti artists are really trying to say when they write about tagging is that spray painting is their passion. You, too, are a graffer (graffiti artist) so do you just spray interior walls, or do your work outside on the down low?

Swallowin' My Pride

When I'm on the outs and I'm home wit' my grandma, I swallow my pride because she wants me to live a different lifestyle than I live, but I just want to run all the time, but I do good for my grandma and swallow my pride and listen to her. But I don't listen on everything she say, and I continue to mess up.

This is my tenth time here and my grandma is tired of me being here, so they're recommending placement, and I'm going to placement for sure this time. They sending me to R-House in Santa Rosa, so I ain't trippin', because I'm going to be close to home, and if I work the program, then they said that I'll be able to get out in nine months to a year.

So I don't know what else to say, but thanks, Beat! I'm out.

-Kasper

From The Beat: You have a good attitude toward going to placement. Maybe being faced with being partly in the county in Santa Rosa, all new people, a new school, new drama, new things to think about, will show you how independent you are becoming, and teach you, you can rely on yourself.

Running

Yea you could run from yo self whenever you want even when you in here... you could sing/rap...real a book...go to sleep, all of these things take your mind away from reality on then your gone!

Election 2008

I'm so happy Obama won of course 'cause he's black and this will for surely be up in a history book! But not only that I truly believe that he's got a better plan for the economy and it might not change over night but it will happen! 'Cause at the condition we in right now life ain't looking to good.. we need all the help we could get and after he gave that speech and shared his plan wit us I truly believe with my whole heart that he's the man for the job!!! I pray every chance I get--Go OBAMA. I vote Obama for president.

-ForEVER ME

From The Beat: We know you've been released and hope you are doing well! Go you.

The Beat Within

Barack Obama is the MF President! Yes! We in there. We in the MF white house now. Blacks got this shhh. And we ain't never coming out. We need to be in there for like hundreds like the white folks. We can even get some Mexicans and stuff. It's good to have control.

-M

From The Beat: It's good to feel proud. We know he has a lot of hard work ahead, and hope he can continue to create the unity in this country he envisions.

You Just Do You And I'm a Do Me

Boys stay talking like they wit the shh and like they big and bad, but really they lil' punks. And the cold thing about it they just want to look good for people they neva gon see on the outs. But if you a real boy you lay back and let it go in one ear and out the otha. Ya feel me cause money talk. Real spitta. Ya dig but check this out in Richmond we don't do no talking you feel. So if you ever got into it with some-body and you let them walk away yo bad it's gon catch up with you real spitta hahahaha.

-Pooh

From The Beat: Sounds like everybody's a lil' punk compared to those from Richmond—what choice do people have around you than to try and act bad? Do you like it when people fear you? Is everyone in Richmond afraid of everyone else? Sounds stressful.

Being Easy

Of course it's easy being in here ain't got nothing to stress about or get more in trouble. But life is actually life when you on the outs you can get it cracking might be 2:30 in the morning stumbling across town from your house tryna make it home with out getting caught by the cops.

It's on and cracking but it's stupid to go to jail for that instead I rather go in for something. Or do more time if it's worth it if it don't benefit anything you believe in or what you're doing. Then you wasting time in here when you worth more on the out kicking back partying like the old time before you everyone got locked up and spread apart. Can't wait until we all out, to have that party we all said we will have after all this time!

-Remy

From The Beat: What else are you looking forward to you when you are released? How do you think the time everyone is doing will affect your decisions when you're out?

The Outs

Life on the outs is easier because you can escape those people who bother you in jail they're always around. Life on the outs is also easier because you have real food and real school and you can benefit more on the outs if you make good choices, shhh. I'm never coming BACK!

Pride

According to the bible pride is a sin so I swallow my pride a lot. But being locked up? Its hard because your around the same people every day! But yeah no one is worth you being locked up or locked up longer. Just stay in good space and thangs will turn around. Stay Strong!

-Lady Chief

From The Beat:

Barack Obama

I think that Barack Obama being President is a good thing because he is the first black President. He made history on November 4th 2008. I think that if he goes through with what he says he's gonna do then he will be a great president.

-Josh

From The Beat: We're with you. We're looking forward to the future and what we can accomplish together.

For My Mom

What's good Beat? Well I'm up in New Founds, I hate it up in here. I got to watch what I do 24/7. I don't want to mess up and go back to the hall in get sent to Fouts. Every time I try to do good I mess up. I can't "bang" or kick it with my boys. I wish I could of stayed in challenge it was crackin'.

I'm going to try to do good not for me but for my mom. Because my pops just got locked up. I've been here for 3 months it don't feel like it I just take it day by day. When I get back on the outs to Vacaville I wonder if it will be different when I get back. It feels like I'm going to do bad. Everybody be on me. I got in trouble already I got one chance I hope I don't mess up.

The clock is ticking fingers itching.

-Stunkey

From The Beat: Well it sounds like your Mom and you might be able to do each other some good. It's good to keep what's really important to you fresh in your mind...so when you're tempted to do something that won't get you where you want to go you can stop yourself. You'll get better at doing well the longer you practice.

Two Weeks

What's good Beat and Beat readers? Got fourteen days left and I'm gonna be out. I'm not scared or worried like most people say they are about getting out. I've heard a lot of people say they're scared because they know they're coming back...not me. It's not hard for me to not get into trouble.

I want to grow up and stop playing games. I got a job already set up for me and I'm getting married next year. I want to go back to school and get all my credits and maybe go to college. But that's a big maybe. Hopefully I'll have kids so I can give them my knowledge and share my experiences. But Beat wish me luck and it is cool what you do. Stay up. -gone- love & respect

-Spanky

From The Beat: Thanks for all your participation in the Beat! We've heard a lot about your family, and we hope you stick to what you know is most important to you. If you go to college, it's more likely that your kids will too. Good luck with everything!

Money Made Me A Big Boy

I promised I would never be anotha broke ninja from the bay.
That what I told pops before brah passed away.
He said mess with 7 broke ninja's you guaranteed the 8th.
I'm bout my money, grew up hungry until I came up
ever since I always ate. It had me thinking wrong
everyday.
I made anotha fatal mistake. Just looking for food,
money
help me find my place. The place I stand has a lot to do
with my race.
I'm intellectual on every single thing I do. Started messing
with these brahs
thought they was wit it 'cause they had a little 10 man
crew.
I wasn't feelin' um so I got that real money hype.
Nothing to lose just gained an attitude, nice clothes and
my pockets grew.
Legit money could do anything that I choose.
Thought I was winnin' get locked up started think I'm
bound to lose.
Now I choose to win. My moto is "forever loyal."
Real world real life money does make the world go
round.
"It's money in the streets and it can't be ignored." Mac
Dre.

-Lo

From The Beat: We all know money is crucial to survival, and if you don't have money it's hard to think about anything besides getting money. However, money is not spirit, or love, or creativity, justice, freedom, compassion, beauty, truth, or any of the other wonders of the world... All these are necessary too.

In My Cousin's Shoes

What's up wid it Beat? Well I'm going to imagine me
being in my cousin's shoes. He's in county jail for serious
charges and he might never get to see the street again.

Man if I was in his shoes man I can't even imagine
how much stress I'll be going through everyday waking
up knowing I might never get out. Man I think I'd go 51-
50. I feel hella bad for my cousin I hope sometime soon
he'll get out. Just being locked up ain't cool especially
in county jail. I never been there but my cousin tell me
it ain't cool especially when you a gang member you be
in your room 23 hours a day. Man I hope they free him.
Aight Beat till next time.

-Cousin

From The Beat: When things like this happen to people close to you, they affect you more. What does this mean to you, to your life? Are you wearing shoes a little smaller than your cousins? You don't want to grow into his shoes, you understand he has lost his life.

On My Mind

This is on my mind. When I get out it's going to be hella
hard to get a job real talk. It's going to be hard because
of my record. I got in a lot of trouble and now I kind of
regret it. Because I wont be able to get a good paying job.
It sucks because I wanna make good money you know.
People don't want somebody that's been locked up and
have a strike. Well that's on my mind.

-Bay Star

From The Beat: We think there are some people out there who will give
you a chance. You need to be open to the idea that with or without a
strike, you can be a great person for someone to hire—and so they will!
Keep the positive things about you in mind, when you get scared, think
of all the reasons you'd be great.

Time to Think

What's up Beat, if you ask me, if life is easier on the outs
than incarcerated why? Well one simple word says it all
"freedom", but the thang about being locked up is like
you get time to think an it stops you from committing
worse crimes.

-Sharif

From The Beat: This is true. Has your time to think helped you? Do you
think you will be better able to take care of your freedom when you are
released again?

Home

I ran away from a group home before just because I did
not want to be there.

I just don't like to be anywhere besides home. Group
home is not for me. I have a baby that I need to be home
with. I don't have time to be in here.

-Need to be home

From The Beat: We're glad to hear you want to be home with your baby.
How can you make sure you can stay free and able to stay with your
family when you are released again. You decide what you have time,
or do time for.

Reality: Anything is Possible

I think being out is easier because we have our freedom.
When I'm out I can do what I want so it's less problems
because I won't have people telling me what to do so
much. There's a lot more things to do so it makes life
funner.

I was running because I was scared to face my
problems and emotions. I ran because my parents were
having problems and I was part of them. I was young, sad,
scared and angry. I didn't know what to do so I ran by
using drugs and running the streets and eventually I did
all the time I've done now.

I've learned a lot about myself since I've been locked
up. I've been locked up since June 2006, and went to
Juvenile Hall, CYA, and back again. I learned a lot in CYA
and will use what I learned when I'm out.

I've swallowed my pride plenty of times and continue
to swallow my pride, which is what I'll have to do if I want
to be successful. I swallowed my pride when a staff in
CYA disrespected me, or when a ward disrespected me. I
knew that if I wanted to get out and stay out, I'd have to
learn to swallow my pride when it would bring me down.

Barack Obama being elected President makes me a
part of history too, because I'm alive and it affects me.
The election helped me realize that anything is possible.
I hope Obama will be as good a President as his speeches
are, and that he gets us out of the hole Bush got us in.

-Brandon

From The Beat: You make a lot of sense in this piece, and sound
confident you know what to do now. We appreciate that you don't take
it as a personal insult to swallow your pride, and can keep the bigger
picture in mind. We also appreciate being part of the Obama times,
have high hopes—and hope he gets some sleep now. Your thinking is
great clean and sober, do you plan to keep that going?

The Whole Community

I think Barack Obama.... Is going to be a very good
President. He is going to make a change in life. He looks
like he's going to make possible changes that the whole
community is going to like. I think he's going to be a good
president.

-Luis

From The Beat: Do you think he needs the people in the country to try
to make changes also?

"Sefula"

Sefula means 10 in Samoan
 10 days left then I'm going
 10 days left and hopefully I'll be free
 then I will just keep it real and do me
 dies means 10 in Spanish
 when I get out it will be outlandish
 I really hope I get out I also pray
 I pray for that great day Saturday
 Will I get out only time will tell
 Or be stuck in juvi where I can't post bail
 I can't stand this place it's getting to me
 Malosi to the fullest if you don't know
 This captivity has me ready to blow
 What will I do for better ways?
 Just pray I get out in these 10 days.

-Sean aka Pacific Islander

From The Beat: We think this did not happen for you, our condolences. Now how are you using your time, imagining that waiting longer has some real benefit for you...what are you studying?

Election Of 2008

I think Obama will make somewhat of an impact in this country. Although I wasn't really feeling the election. Also if I were to vote I would vote for Obama because he's black. Although neither Mc Cain or Obama hold my interest.

I don't think they're focusing on most issues. I hope though, that Obama can fix this crisis we're in. I'm never voting in my life though. Never! Unless a Mexican is running for office.

-Carlos

From The Beat: Do you know of the mayor of Los Angeles, Villaraigosa? Some say that black politicians who were mayors paved the way for Barack Obama's ability to run for president. If you agreed with almost everything a politician stood for, and believed he or she would do their best—would you vote for them? What would it take for you to trust that someone of a different ethnicity or race would represent your interests well?

Safe

Life is easier in here because you don't have to worry about getting shot or dying. I don't be running from jail because if I get caught you get more time. I wanted Obama to win because he is black and we never had a black President.

-Lorenzo

From The Beat: We hear frustrations about being locked up, all the time. We understand. We also know that some lives are saved that would have been in danger on the street. What would it take in your life to feel safe when you are released? Would you have to move, or stay inside at dark, or what?

You Do You

Wassup Beat this yo boy Joey! Well only 16 more days and I'm out of here. I did 4 months in the new foundation program and 3 months in the court process. Ever since I been here I tried to stay out of trouble. People talk a lot of mess but I keep to myself. Because I know I'm going to be out of here before any of them. So my advice is just to keep to yo self and do your own thing. Because it's way easier to stay out of trouble. Well that's my point of view. So I'm a do me and you do you.

-Joey

From The Beat: We hope you've made plans, and have support and motivation to follow through with them. Stay free in 2009! Do your future.

On the Outs

I think it's easier on the outs because we are able to do what we want to!!! And eat what we want to. And sleep however long we want to.

Sometimes I feel like socking people in the mouth because I get hecka frustrated and sometimes I can't control it, but I have to think before I act, so then I don't get in trouble with the staff. Also sometimes I feel like hitting bottom because of all of the frustration, but I think about it then change my mind--because I want to have a job, wife, kids, and a house before I die.

-Silent One

From The Beat: Keep going toward that job, wife, kids and house...get a good clear picture in your mind and heart of what that would look like and feel like, and make your decisions based on whether the thing at hand is bringing you closer to that goal, or not. You know what's really important to you. Practice responding instead of reacting every day!!

When You Want

Life on the outs is way easier than being in here. The reason why I think it's easier is because you don't gotta take orders from people who you don't want to. You can eat and take a shower when you want, also you can sleep.

The only thing I ran away from was the Fairfield Police Department when I was in a bad situation. I also ran from a man after I was stealing his rims off his car.

-Marcus

From The Beat: Your piece pretty much shows how it's not always possible to have everything you want all the time. You can be free, but you can't have rims that you didn't buy yourself. Which do you want more?

It's a Cold Game

I think life in here is easier because in the outs I got to watch my back 24/7 for police and active gang members. In here I ain't even trippin' on watching my back 'cause if they run up they gonna get done up by close fist you feels. But in the outs rivals be tryna pull guns and knives. But that's how the game is. It's a cold game.

-Mouser

From The Beat: We edited a bit. Most say it's easier outside, because they don't like being told what to do. Only those whose lives are at risk think it's easier inside. It looks like a really difficult position to be in to us, safe but locked up or risking death, but—"free"? Is that freedom? If you weren't in a situation where you had to worry only about your survival what would you do with your life?

America's Election

I wanted Barack to win. I am a democrat, but I'm conservative too. Even though I don't believe in abortion or gay marriage I still think Obama will be a good President. I think Mc. Cain will be just like Bush with his power.

So I'm glad Obama won, but this election has taught me a lot, like a lot of people in America don't even know about their own country like a lot of people when you ask them who they would rather vote for and why they say Obama, and because his black. They don't even know what either president stands for. So I just get mad to know that a lot of people are uneducated so that's why I'm going to do my part in getting educated and educating my kids.

-Jonathan

From The Beat: Education is crucial to many things in life...it allows you to do many more things, make more money, understand more, meet more people than you can when uneducated. Of course you want that for your kids too. Education is not provided equally to all people now, and we hope Barack Obama will work on that.

Barack Obama

I hope the community gets better, and puts new things out for the kids to have fun. They need to start making new programs for the community. And get America out of bankruptcy.

-Dustin

From The Beat: Do you have any ideas for new things for kids to have fun with? What would be part of a program for kids that you would have liked to do? Dances? Sports? Music classes? Give us all some ideas.

President of 2009 Until 2013

November 4th 2008- I was so juiced that Obama won the election. Obama go dumb, he's finally gonna do what's needed to happen. This the only President I ever be interested in meeting, and will. My head hurts so I'm fena take it down. It's Lil' Nite, I'm out...

-Lil' Nite

From the Beat: We're with you, now patiently waiting for January to hurry up and get here. What would you want to talk with him about if you could meet him?

Either Way I Could Do It

I think both (in the system or out of the system) are easy because when you're locked up, people tell you what to do and all you gotta do is listen. And on the out, all you gotta do is obey the law and go to school, and it'll be all right.

-Young D

FromThe Beat: This sounds like a good plan. Where did you get caught up?

Getting Out

I think it's better to stay on the outs 'cause even tho it's a cold game you can still have your freedom you can still do what you want. And in here you have no freedom and you get told what to do.

I went to court today tho and I'ma get released on 90 days EMP so that's good. Hopefully I don't come back but never say never you know 'cause you can't predict the future.

Challenge did show me something tho it's a good program but I gotta plan. When I get out I'm a get a job and get my own canton you know kick back and shit. But chale that's all I got for today, hopefully they get my monitor ready soon alrato.

-Krazy

From The Beat: Even if you can't predict the future you can still decide what you will or will not do in certain situations, you can decide how you choose to respond and then help yourself make sure you think before you act instead of just reacting. It is a cold game, stay warm if possible.

Running

Well, I ran from a group home because I was getting more and more depressed by the day, kind of like here, so I ran. I learned that I would have to do it one day, so I'm just going to do what I have to at the next group home. If I deal with it now, it'll be done and over with. The sooner, the better.

-Kevin

From The Beat: Have you learned anything that can help keep your spirits up while you do your program? Do you read, write, draw, meditate, anything? It will help you to pass time, process your feelings, and learn about your self and how to stay free when you are again released.

Running

I'm running from doing better in my life. I really want to change my life, but it's really hard because of my bad habits. I wish it was easier, because getting in trouble for really stupid things is not good for my future. I wanna have a family, a good job, and a decent house, but for that to happen I need to change up my attitude and every dumb thing I used to do.

My plans to when I get out is to make all my loved ones happy and proud. I'm a get a job, stay in school, and find a better crowd to hang out with. Also I'm a try so hard to stay out of trouble and not commit any crimes.

-Slowing Down

From The Beat: When you look back and see what caused the decisions that you made when you did "dumb" things, do you understand what to do differently next time? Should you drink or use drugs? Lots of times that causes people to think things are a good idea that are really not. We want you to make them happy and proud too, and we wish you luck feeling happy and proud of yourself. Don't be afraid of your self. In the long run it's a lot easier if you let some light in.

11-5-08

It's easier being out because it cracks on the outs parties, females, eat whatever you want and it's kinda stupid but I'm going to say it anyways. On the outs I don't even think about "candy" but in here I would if I could and not get caught (rob the teachers blind of all of it) that's how pathetic it is being in here. Well I can't wait till I get out so I can hit up some parties.

-Sweet Tooth

From The Beat: You say it's pathetic being in there--and we understand, and the detail you provided as an example is a great description. However, if you just go back to partying, will that keep you out of "here" (where it's pathetic) and free? What are your plans for your future?

Challenge Works Outs

Yo what it do Beat I'm gonna talk about our work out hear in Challenge it's a cool program if you follow the rules. Our work out starts at 3:15 and end at 4:15 it depends on who's working us out, so Tuesday through Saturday we run 20 laps- our court yard is like half of a gym-then after we run laps we get on our mats.

We start off by stretching our right hand across the chest, then the left. After that stretch we sit on our butts right leg back left leg followed and lean back and the same with the other leg, then butter fly stretch. Butter fly stretch is when you sit on your butt and put the bottom of your feet together. All of the stretches are 20 seconds count.

After we all stretch we do 300 single count jumping jacks, if we don't do them right then we have to do 300 more on top of the 300 we already have--so we have go up at the same time and down at the same time and count all together. If we show that were giving 100% then we don't work so hard after jumping jacks. We do 60 crunches, after 60 crunches we do 20 push ups--then back to crunches this time it's 50. So every time we do a set of crunches we take ten away but not on push ups--we hit push ups all day you feel me we locked up in here. Any way after those sets we do pull ups--20, then squats. After we work out then they let us play football too--hand touch or basketball and that's about it.

-Young D

From The Beat: We have to say the workout sounds challenging. We think you like it, at least enough to write about it, we are not exactly sure...however you don't sound like you're complaining. If you do this work out for months you'll be in good shape. Do you like the way it makes you feel, and sleep?

A Hmong Boy

Whenever I'm in the outs, my dad always tells me stories. He would say my Hmong fellows in Laos are getting killed. General Vang Pao tried to help, but he got locked up for standing up.

My dad always tells me how lucky I am to be in the US. He would always show me movies about little kids with guns fighting the Laos government.

I'm just a Hmong boy. I can't do nothing, but just watch my people die. The US did nothing about it, when it was us who helped fight the Vietnam War.

One day hopefully my people will live in peace not having to hide in the forest. You feel me?

-Lil' Solider

From The Beat: Hearing educational stories from parents are fun. One gets to learn about themselves and their culture. However, some stories can bring tears to one's eyes. I think we all hope that one day the violence will end.

The Beat Within

This is The Beat: it's about how someone can change their life by not smoking or drinking. There's many ways I am going to change my life.

I'm having a baby on the way; it's hard trying to take care of a baby when you're in JJC. Because, my child will have a parent that's, why I'm going to change my life. Someone is trying to do what I got to do, because I don't have time for baby mamma drama. That's why people post to go to school and do what you have to do. The end.

-Gregory

From The Beat: You're thinking ahead, that's great. You want to change for you and your baby and you can. It is hard to be a parent when you're far away, stay thinking positive that will help you stay on track.

My First Girl

My girlfriend is going to have a baby around new years. I am going to tell you how happy I am to have my first baby.

When my girlfriend told me that she was pregnant, I was shocked because we are both so young. She is 17 and I am 16. When you guys have a baby your whole life will change. When your girl friend is like six or seven months along you just can't wait for the day they will be born. My daughter's name is Genesis Guadalupe. Me and my girlfriend are so happy that we are having our first baby.

- Happy Father

From The Beat: Congratulations Dad. We hope that you start to make plans to take care of this little girl like a responsible adult, and remember that every decision you make effects more than just you now.

Run

I feel like going on the run to be free, but it's not all that easy.

If I go on the run it will hurt it will hurt my grandma and my family.

That's a reason why I don't leave the state to go free.

Another reason why is because I have a beautiful baby girl.

It makes me mad because, I can't be there to support her and my girlfriend.

Mostly I love my grandma too!

Well that's all I want to write today. Peace out beat!

-Little D

From The Beat: You're right being on the run affects everybody. We can see that family means a lot to you. Sounds like you have a loving family, you should be thankful for that.

What's Easier?

Dear Beat, one of the things that make it easier on the outs is being able to have your fit. Not wearing clothes that other people already wore. Eating the nasty food, and when you take showers the water shuts off after 10 seconds automatically. That's what makes it easier on the outs.

-Young

From The Beat: JJC is a controlled environment everything you do is monitored, and given to you. It's a good thing you don't like it in here, be good and stay on the outs.

New President Is History

Well Obama has already won the election. So I hope that he makes a change around Fresno like putting some different race judges. Because I am tired of going to court and seeing all white boys get out and then everybody else gets time. To them I am already looked as a gangbanger or a bad person. But a black President is history and I am happy. It makes me think that any thing can happen.

-Rb

From The Beat: You're right on, this was an historic election and so many people have hope that it will change the way race relations go down in this country. How do you think having a Black president will change the choices you make about your life?

Life

Well, I have a lot to say about life.

I love life and life can't get any better or any worse.

Right now that we have a new President.

Things are going to change.

Things might get a little better.

Well, my life is not good right now.

I'm locked up and I miss my baby's mama.

I stress and life is just not going my way.

I wish I can get out and be free and appreciate life like if I was a new born baby brought to this world. When I was a baby I didn't care if I got locked up and taken away from life.

Now, I'm pleading to go home with my mom!

I really miss her and my baby's mother and when I go home

I will take the time to enjoy life.

-Nick

From The Beat: You have the choice to direct you life unlike your baby shouldn't have a care in the world.

Running Around, Mentally Gone

Hey everybody, it's your boy Goblin.

I was at a group home and I wanted to run but I did in a different way. I went away to a mental hospital.

When I got out, all I knew was my parole officer was looking at me then he told me I was going back to the Hall. I was like "wow", so I flipped out and they had to restrain me and put me in handcuffs. Then they threw me in the back of the car and brought me back to this hell hole. But it's all good I'll be out soon and back on the streets. That's what it is, talk to you later.

-Goblin

From The Beat: Stop and think. Is that the best for you, to go back to the streets? Is that life going to bring you happiness and peace? It's much easier to go through life as it is, perhaps as it's been for generations. The hardest is to go against the grain. That takes hard work and courage. I hope that you have the strength to find that happiness. Start by getting your high school diploma. Second, find at least one friend that is not involved in a gang that doesn't use drugs and alcohol. Third join something, anything, like a sport. Good Luck.

This Special Election

The election between Barack Obama and McCain has changed my life for the simple fact that we now have a black man in office. This will open up doors for the older, intelligent, black people, so they can get good jobs to support their family and young loved ones.

-Christopher

From The Beat: We agree with you. These are good intentions; everyone should have doors open to them to make an honest livable wage to care for their families.

Running From What?

"You can run, but you can't hide." That is a famous quote that everyone knows. I used to run away from my problems when I got scared, thinking that if I keep on doing that it's all going to go away. Little did I know it all caught up with me.

Now I'm hurt and I also hurt my family. Like when I used to get in trouble I would just leave thinking that it was okay but it wasn't. Now I'm here doing my time for what I did and what I've done. Ha, it's funny how life is. What you think could happen to you in 30-40 years, it could happen to you in the next 2-3 seconds. It all adds up in the end. All you people out there, I tell you guys to make smart choices and don't run from your problems, just deal with them.

-Lujan

From The Beat: Your words ring true! Running from things in our lives is like living in denial. When we can't face the things we are running from, we end up hurting ourselves, and those we love. It's not easy to face those things, so what's your story? What were you running from and how did those things catch up with you?

If I Have This Kid...

If I have this kid,
would I be afraid?
What would I do?
What would I think?
I would be afraid
Of taking care for it.

If I would cry,
Then I would be blind,
But I would know why,
I hurt the ones that I love.

I have already cried
So many times that
My tears have all dried up.

-Aaron

From The Beat: Our actions have consequences that may be hard to deal with. If you don't have a baby, what will you do in the future to make sure you don't get scared like that again? If you do have a baby, what will you do to take care of it?

Which Is Easier

I have been locked up for one year and two months. And now they have sentenced me again for eight more months. And since I have been in here for that time, I would say that being in here is easier than being outside because you get everything handed to you. On the outs you have to go and get it yourself.

-Anthony

From The Beat: Life is about doing things for yourself, as is being an adult. Is having no freedom more important to you than being a respected adult?

Thanksgiving

I'm still locked up; this is my third holiday in JJC. But it's okay, because it's Thanksgiving and we are decorating the pod. Also we get to have turkey on Thanksgiving. HAPPY THANKSGIVING!!

-Quinton

From The Beat: Decorations always make a difference; they can put a smile on ones face.

Poem

Another poem to my girl- Allison
You're, on the way to heaven, me on the way to hell.
You're on the way to light,
Me on the way to darkness, filled with Satan like creatures.
You're filled with god's love.
Me, somebody the devil can laugh at, sneer at, hurt and I don't blame him.

-Zippity

From The Beat: Wow, this poem defiantly has a bright side and a dark side. Although one feels they have an evil side, that's not always the case. Think about the bad, but also the good things you will do to change. Think positive there's light for everyone.

Life In Temper's Head

Life in a cell
I wish I had bail
This life never fails
I can't wait till I get mail
In jail I have no sales
About to move up to the county jail
I'm about to get out of this hell
Go back to my sales
I hope I don't end up in hell

-Temper

From The Beat: You're right Temper, you definitely can't bargain your way out of JJC, you just have to go through with it. You've got a knack for poetry so keep writing.

Shout-Out To All

I'm sending shout-outs to all the guys in the JJC. I'm going to let you know how it is man. How hard it is to not come back to the chillin' spot. You gotta be mentally unstable to not know wrong. Don't be no dummy, stop following up behind other people, understand me. Do what you know. I do.

-Swosher Ninja

From The Beat: What do you mean when you say "chillin spot"? What is it that people must know and do?

Life

Life is hard, life is rough and in my life I can't get enough. I sell rocks on the block and protect the block with a chop because life is tough. Life can be easy; life can be hard it depends when you pull that card.

In my life, I shot at people and shot people, that's why I pop pills and keep doing evil but I don't feel like my life is bad as I wear ski masks and steady try to count cash and live life fast and that's why my life is a bad life.

-Yagee

From The Beat: Yagee, you have a talent with words but the content of your words is not the life to have, it will only bring you a lot of grief. We hope that one day you can write about how "your bad life" turned "good".

Life Sucks

I'm not going to write about any of the topics but I am going to write about what's happened to me the whole month I've been here.

I have been here a month and I missed out on my sister's 18th birthday, and my brother's 21st birthday, and even my own 15th birthday which was yesterday. I don't do anything but the same stuff from the day before which was nothing.

Anyways, I still have another month to go. So I'll do my time. Gotta go.

-Neal

From The Beat: Happy belated Birthday Neal! When you're stuck in JJC, you really miss out on a lot. Stay strong, and you'll get through one more month.

Changed Man

I am a changed man when I am in the JJC. Once I get out of the JJC I will be a changed man. My attitude will change, my addiction to drugs will change, my grades will change, and the most important thing that will change is that I will be a better person to my family and the rest of the world.

-Andrew

From The Beat: Change is not just something that you decide to be. You have to take steps to change...what will your steps be?

Where Is Life Easier?

Life is a lot easier when you are on the outs. It is hard when you are locked up because you can't do anything and they just have you in a little room. When you are out, you have a better chance of going somewhere in life. It is a lot easier to look for a job, or to get a school scholarship for a sport or to just be smart when you are on the outside.

Being out also keeps you close to your family, and you could be with them during the holidays and the other stuff.

When you are locked up it keeps you from doing all of those things. That's why I think that it is a lot easier to live on the outside.

-Mario

From The Beat: We hope that you see that being in the JJC is the consequence of choices that you made, and in order to have the things you want on the outside like a job, or an education, then you will have to make different choices for yourself.

Refusing To Loose

Life is easier in here than out there because in here we do the same thing everyday.

Out there, we're either dodging bullets or running from the cops, that's what I do when I'm out. I have to watch my back in my own hood because either someone's going to try to take my life or the cops are going to try to get me.

In the hood I have to make money to support my babies, a boy and a girl the hard way. I'm too young to get a job. Basically that's it, that's the way it's in the outs. That's why it's hard for me. But at the same time I have to be out there with my kids and be a father to them not a stranger on child support.

-Lil' Kay

From The Beat: We see your logic of taking care of your kids the best way you know how. But, it's not the best way. Having a father killed or in prison doesn't give them or yourself a hopeful future.

Postponing My Problems

There was a point in time when all I knew how to do was run or it just seemed easier to do, when all it really did was postpone the problem and make it worse.

-James

From The Beat: It's always easier to run and postpone things than it is to face them. At what point did you finally face your problems? Was it too late?

Not So Free

Every time I get out no matter how hard I try, I end up back in the streets working double and even triple shifts. The streets took me from my mom, my family, and even some of my old friends. But when I'm in the streets I feel so free and nobody can tell me what to do.

-Lil'

From The Beat: This is not a good cycle, eventually this lifestyle may intensify and take you from your family completely.

*When that is all that you know,
then you are forced to live your
life the way you have to... so
back to the ghetto I go.*

Back To The Ghetto

When I get out, I am going back to the ghetto, where I can smoke and do whatever I want to. Now I have a son to take care of so I have to do what I have to do, to keep my son alive. My baby is what keeps me focused in the game.

Being in the game isn't a joke, one false move and your life can be took. I am not saying that it is good to be from the ghetto, but when that is all that you know, then you are forced to live your life the way you have to... so back to the ghetto I go.

-Lonzo

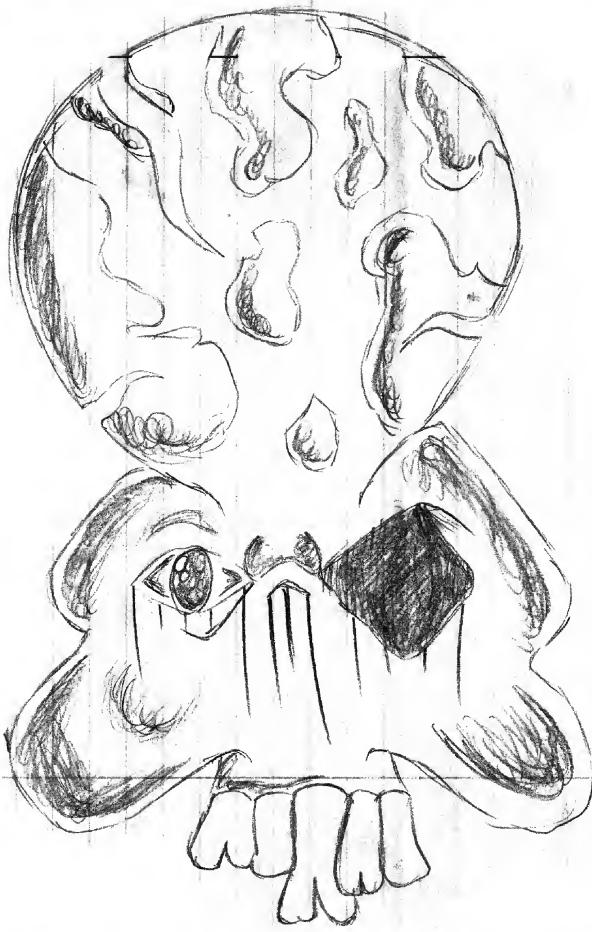
From The Beat: If you live the way you do because the hood is all you know, then wouldn't it be best to give your child more options in life than you were given? If you teach your child, as you were taught, to do what you have to do to stay in the game, what will their options be when they get to be your age?

Life In and Out

I think life in here or on the outs is both hard, 'cause in here it is hard because the time you're doing and because you can't see your family. But on the outs you probably don't live to be 16 years old because there are people out to get you, those haters, even if you're doing good. So I say if you're on the outs or in here, just keep your head up!

-Pepe

From The Beat: You bring up a good point. Life does not get any easier when you get out, but getting out does mean you'll have the opportunity to turn your life around and make changes that will take you in a more positive direction. Unfortunately, there will always be haters in life who'll want to bring you down. What can you do to stay safe when you get out, and what can you do to start living a more positive life?



Easier Life

The easy way of life for me is in here. I never get in trouble in here. I keep myself above water. I can't violate or catch another charge in here. My life is screwed up but I will change it.

-Lamar

From The Beat: We encourage you to have those positive thoughts. Saying that you will change it is the first step. Next, it will be a test of your actions.

Better On The Outs

Life in JJC is hard because of the things they do here. It ain't that bad but the only things I don't like are the time you do things and the way you have to obey the orders of the staff. This place ain't a good place. They don't even give you good food. I have been in here for over a month and I am still eating the same routine of food. I'm so tired of the same routine here.

Life on the outs is better than JJC, but life on the outs can be hard too. The reason why is because everyday when you step outside, you always have to be careful because you never know what can happen. But at least on the outs, you get to see your loved ones and have more freedom. It's better on the outs because then you don't stress because you miss people.

-Hurricane

From The Beat: You're right, there are good and bad things about life in JJC and life on the outs, but as you mentioned, life in JJC can mostly suck because of the food, the same routine everyday, and because you lack the freedom to do as you wish. When you get, how will you appreciate those things more?

Roaming around the JJC

Roaming is fun.
Hanging out is all cool.
But when trouble comes
You are nothing but a fool.
All the homeboys you had,
All the people with funk,
They don't give a skunk
When you are stuck in a bunk.
When you get out,
You do it again,
Don't be that irresponsible,
Get your head in the game.

-Dylen

From The Beat: Great advice Dylen. What will you do different when you get out? We'd like to hear from you again.

Can't Wait Until I'm Free

I am locked up indeed.
I wonder when I'm going to be free.
Sometimes I have to grind my teeth or pinch my self until I bleed.
Then I realize I am still in here.
I can't wait until I get out, indeed.
Sometimes I wish I could flee.
But I have to wait until I am free.

-Junior

From The Beat: Do not stray. We pray indeed, this will pay!

Nothing Changes But The time

It is the same thing.
Time is nothing,
If you do the same thing.
Don't drop dimes,
They keep you down.
Unless you get life,
Then you are fricked,
Then you are stuck
Looking at a cell your whole life.
So remember,
Nothing changes but the time.

-Tomastia

From The Beat: Nothing changes but the times on the clock, when you sit around and let the time go by. When does someone get up and decide to stop watching the clock? When will you?

In Here, It's Not Cool

It is weird to say to say "me not we" because I have a partner and baby girl. In here, it is not cool. I wish I had a clock to rewind the time because it is weird to look out a window you can not see out.

-Dylan

From The Beat: Since the clock still continues...instead of going back, we hope that from this day forward, you never come back.

Darkness To Light

For the first time when I was in here, I thought about my family and changing my life. I thought about starting all over again when I'm back out in the world. People will lead me into darkness and I can't think that it's right. It's hard on the outs and life changes.

-Chansanith

From The Beat: You're right. Life changes, situations change, and people can also change. This means you can change too.

Cual Es El Mejor

Que ondas Raza! Quiero platicarles un poco de la vida. Creo que la vida es mejor afuera porque tienes libertad de vivir como queremos. Puedes vivir la vida sanamente.

Aqui adentro estas privado de muchas cosas. Tienes que cumplir muchas reglas para poder estar aqui. Aqui adentro la vida es más dura. Afuera todo es mejor. Ya voy a poder salir afuera y me voy a cuidar. Voy a disfrutar mi libertad.

Bueno, creo que Obama cambiara la cara del pais. Espero que defienda los derechos de los imigrante, dando a que el es hijo de imigrante. Creo que el traerá un cambio a este pais.

From The Beat: Claro que la libertad es mayor vivirla y gozarla afuera. A nadie le gusta vivir adentro. Esperamos que ahora que te distes cuenta lo importante que es vivir afuera, esperamos que sepas escoger lo mejor.

Which Is Better

What's up people! I want to share something about life. I think life is better on the outs because you have the freedom to live how we want to live. You can live life healthy.

In here you are deprived from a lot of things. You have to follow a lot of rules to be here. Life in here is harder. On the outs everything is better. I'm about to get out to take care of myself. I'm going to enjoy my freedom.

Well, I think Obama will change the face of this country. I hope he defends the immigrant rights giving the fact that he is son of an immigrant. I think he will bring a change to this country.

-Rosny, San Francisco

From The Beat: Of course it is better to live a life on the outs. Nobody likes to live in here. Now that you know how important it is to live on the outs, we hope you know to choose what's best.

La Vida Adentro O Afuera

La vida es mejor estando afuera porque tenemos la libertad de comer la comida que se te antoje, andas tirando el rol por las bandas y tambien tienes tiempo de hacer cosas como andar con los amigos, andar de parranda, y hacer las cosas que tú quieras.

Estando aqui es una pesadilla porque te encuentras con la gente que tu no te puedes llevar como los negros. Hay algunos que te llevas bien y otros que se quieren pasar de lanza. No vale la pena estar aqui. Un saludo a todos los Catrachos.

From The Beat: Pero de que vale andar con los amigos y andar de parranda si eso los lleva al mismo lugar donde estan. Bueno ahora ya sabes como es estar en este lugar. Esperamos que no se te vaya olvidar.

Life Inside Or Outside

The better life is on the outs because we have the freedom to eat all kind of food we want, you are able to cruise around, and you also have time to kick it with your friends, parties, and do the things you want to do.

Being here is a nightmare because you are with people you can't get along with like blacks. They are some who you can get along with and other who want to take advantage of you. It's not worth it to be here. My greetings to all.

-Harin, San Francisco

From The Beat: What good is it to hang with your friends and partying if those activities can bring you back in here? Now you know how it is to be here, we hope you don't forget it.

Otro Amanecer

Se me amanece otra vez
No sé que está pasando
Entre perico y perico paso las noches fumando
Aveces siento que caigo y aveces que ando volando
El día que muera yo quiero morir en avión
Con el motor alterado para sentir
El arrancón

Porque dicen que la emosion de la altura es bonita
Las cantinas que hay aqui corren sin parar
Con el celular en la bolsa que no deja de sonar
Porque tambien otros compas quieren volar
La muerte me anda buscando
No me le voy a escoder
Al contrario, cuando la encuentre se que me va a comprender
El que me da la lisencia de ver otro amanecer.

From The Beat: Estas segura que la muerte te comprendera. Hemos escuchado decir que cuando la muerte llega, no escucha ni entiende, y solo llega con su propósito. Y parece que con el camino que lleva te llevara a su destino. En otras palabras, tú la estas siguiendo y ella se te está ocultando. Ten cuidado con lo que haces porque puede y sea tu fin.

Another Dawn

The dawn hit me once again
I don't know what's happening
By using cocaine, and more cocaine, I spent all night smoking
Sometimes I feel like I am falling down
And sometimes I feel as I were flying
The day I die, I want to die on an airplane
With the engine altered to not feel the first blast
Because it is said that the being far above land is beautiful
The bars that exist here run without stopping
With the cell phones ringing without stopping in the pockets
Because another people want to fly
Death is looking for me
And I'm not going to hide
Instead, when I find it, I know it will understand me
The one that gives me the license to another dawn.

-Alberto, Fresno

From The Beat: Are you sure that death will understand you. We have heard that when death comes, it doesn't listen, understand, and it only appears for its own purpose. It seems like the road you are taking will take you to its destination. In other words, you are looking for it and it seems like it is hiding from you. Be careful with what you are messin

Mi Situación En La Juvenil

No bonito estar aqui en la prisión. Les dare un consejo, no anden en pandillas ni en cosas malas porque eso lo único que deja es la muerte o la cárcel.

Mi situación por mis supuestos amigos, andabamos robando gente. Lo que conseguimos fue la cárcel. Gracias a Dios nunca conseguimos un disparo que nos llevara a la muerte.

From The Beat: Gracias por tu consejos. Esperamos que muchos aprendan de tu experiencia y escuchen tu consejo.

My Situation In Juvenile Hall

It's not cool to be in prison. I'll give you an advice: don't get into gangs or deal with bad things because it will only take you death and jail.

I'm in this situation due to my supposedly friends because we were robbing. The only thing we gained was jail. Thank God we never gained a bullet that can take us to death.

-Danny, Alameda

From The Beat: Thank for your advice. We hope that many learn from your experience and listen to your advice.

Well Beat I'll holla on a different tip next time, so for now keep cool and God bless your staff.

"Let Me Set This Scene"

Let me take a breath to set this scene
Let me whisper a little game in your ear
So you'll know what I mean
It's been a long time since I've seen what I seen
It was coke and crystal that was glued to my spleen
Don't get it twisted, I'm no dope fiend
Just had a crazy life with the homies on the team
I have Ukiah females jockin' the way that I've seen
Until I smashed out, I know that was mean
No doubt they all still on the team
So peep game as I set this scene
You want to be a factor, I'd advise you stay clean
Before it's too late, and you see what I've seen
Cheak play!
Don't be a victim in this world of pain
Or become a prison number, and fall short of the game
I spit this to you for the knowledge of your brain
If you don't think fast it will never be the same
So maybe you will listen, and maybe you will change
The ball is in your court it's all in your range
Not all cats make it to the fame
But if you focus and maintain
You'll stay in the game
So once more, let me set this scene
Drop some muscle in your hustle
If you know what I mean.
I've been through the game and pushed the cream scene
Now look where I'm at, it came back on me
As we know, one plus two equals three
An F plus R equals EE
So as long as you try, you'll always be free
So open your eyes and see what I see
Family and friends and how much they mean
Well Beat I'm gonna hop off this mic
If you know what I mean
And once again I set up the scene!

Our next writer, Chris Poe, is a brand new writer who was introduced to our publication by his friend. He's sending us props and a little advice from San Quentin State Prison in San Quentin, CA. Chris just wants to give a shout out to all the writers and readers of The Beat Within and offer a few words of advice as he's been down the same path that some of you are on right now. He also would like to share his own rap, which gives you insight on his own life, and the trials and tribulations that he has gone through. So give your attention to Chris as he breaks some game down for y'all to soak in.

To The Beat Within

Yeah Beat... This is Chris Poe at you live from San Quentin. Trip.... My homey from Santa Rosa turned me up to your magazine a few months back, so on that spicy tip. I wanted to say I enjoy reading some of the positive shhh people be rappin' about. I got major love for ya'll get down. You all be doing it coo, a lot of fans no doubt!

Yea.... Thank you big time. I'm not doing a grip of time just a parole violation, but it is enough to peel my eyelids back and get back on top of my game ya' know? I've been kind of doing this for a hot minute now, and I admit it's really played out, seems like forever since I've got to touch base with my people on the streets. so when I parole this time I'm switchin' up. That's fa' sho. I read others poems and so forth, I feel for them.

Yea.... I aint one to judge, we all human, and all make mistakes. Just get back up an "Brush yourself off an try again," just like "Aaliyah" said ha ha..... So for ya'll who's fighting the feeling it's time to unwind. Remember this is temporary. So keep your chin erect playa, and don't let it get you down. Yea.... God Bless.

As for the cats who be tryin' to push weight on the block, play the cards right before it's too late. Experience is on hit. I speak on it 'cause I lived that before, and I don't wanna sound like a preacher but one day will be the wrong day, and then what? Yea.... Game over!

These days it's about squarin' it up. I ain't even perfect, nobody is, but at least we can put the effort towards it ya' know? I know all of you got potential so take advantage of that before it's too late.

Well Beat it's like this when I get out this time I'm gonna ponder my moves like a chess piece, 'cause I ain't tryin' to come back. I'm tryin' to live the life God granted me, and not what Satan granted me. Feel me. Well Beat I'll holla on a different tip next time, so for now keep cool and God bless your staff.

-MICHAEL CHAVEZ-

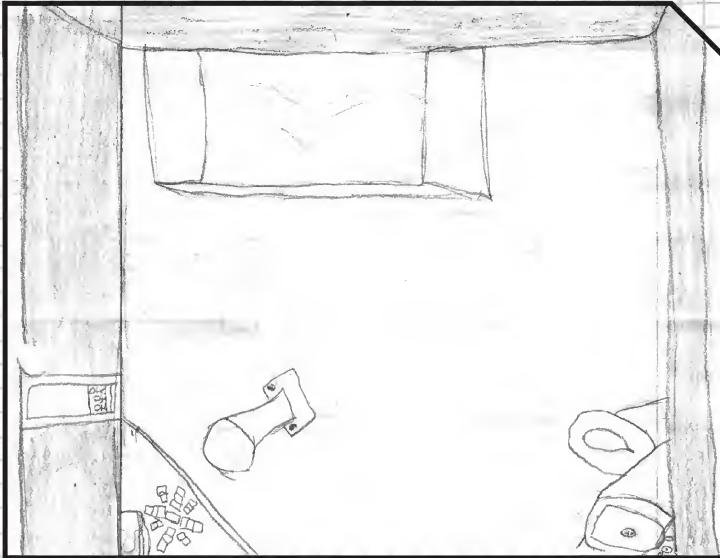
Our next writer, Michael Chavez aka Little Skittles, is sending us a message from Washington State Penn in Walla Walla, Washington. His message is plain and simple as Michael doesn't waste any time and gets straight to the point. Michael is doing some hard time for something he did when he was a young teen. He is now twenty years old and even though he's behind those steel gates he keeps striving to better himself and change from the lifestyle that robbed him of his freedom.

If you look really hard young homies, you will see that you are better off living it up without gangs. I've been changing my life while in a penitentiary full of rival gang members. Why can't you? It's easy just think about what you want in life. You all keep your heads up and stay strong. One love to you all.

Dear Young Gangsters

I know that you all think being a gangster is the life. Really it's not. I'm a 20-year-old gang member and I've been down since I was a young teen for shooting a rival gang member over some stupid stuff. I'm lucky he still lives. The point I want to get to is in the effect of you gang banging you are not just hurting your family you are also hurting yourself.

Having family and life is more valuable than dying over gang violence. You see I lost my thirteen-year-old cousin because of gang violence and she never was a gangster. Then my 6-year-old sister was shot while playing in the front yard of my grandma's house.



Our next writer, Carl Houle aka Pretty Boy, took the time to sit down and really think with his head. His message to all you out there is pretty clear. The subject we're about to touch is about Women. And none of us would be here if it wasn't for a woman. Carl's message is straight from his heart and soul as he openly expresses what he feels for his girl and his son. Writing to us from a Correctional Facility in Santa Rosa, CA, give him his props 'cause it takes a lot of guts to openly express your true feelings.

As We Walk This Life Together

As we walk this life together
 I will always hold your hand
 Always love and protect you this is something I want you to understand
 We have uplifted each other and matured together in many ways
 Our love is so incredible and it holds so many strengths
 As we walk this life together
 I will always do anything to make you smile
 Promise to make you laugh if you're sad I'll make it all worth the while...
 As we walk this life together
 I'll show you how true love is supposed to be
 As we walk this life together
 You'll see you can always count on me
 As we walk this life together
 Remember it all started with a kiss
 On that special night I guess cupid shot 2 arrows that didn't miss
 So always know I love you, you're my queen
 And I promise forever, to love, cherish, and protect you
 As we walk this life together!!

Dedicate to the most important woman in my life, Cassandra. I'm honored to walk this life with you and Dominic.

My Angel Sent From Above

My angel I express some words from my heart it speaks to you
 It thanks you for your love and your time and for always staying true...
 True to yourself because by that then you're also true to me
 True to our future and everything that we will be
 I've held you in my arms and many times gazed into your eyes
 told you that you were special and truly 1 of a kind
 Your beauty is more than skin deep and it's that I've grown to love
 You're the angel that was sent to be from the lord above
 You're everything I've ever wanted and for you my angels I'll always be there
 Lord I thank you for my angel thanks for answering my special prayer!!

This poem is for you Cassandra. Since we have been together we have overcome so many obstacles. Your beauty, words, love & insight never cease to amaze me. I'm so honored to have you in my life as my special girl. Smile for me...I love you.

A Poem For Dominic M. (Lil' Poppa)

Lil' Poppa here are some words that I want you to know for your life
 Always believe in yourself and never let your dream be denied
 You're special in many ways and you're a sunshine inside my life
 A true blessing is what you are mijo that can never be denied
 Follow your heart and by that shoot always for your dreams
 I'll be there for you always no matter what this life may bring
 When I look at you I see a prince who is sweet and innocent
 Whenever we play together you always seem to put a smile on my lips
 Whenever you need to talk or need that special guy advice
 Come to me Lil' Poppa there is no need to ever ask twice.

I'll protect, guide, and love you in directions that are right
 This is a promise that I make to you the rest of my entire life
 And listen to your mother for you she is always there
 Her love for you is unexplainable
 Truly no one can compare
 We want to see you succeed and achieve into a great man
 Want you to see the world is yours
 It's held in the palms of your hand
 Remember to listen to your heart
 And in life allow it to guide you through
 And pleased always remember my Mijo
 That I will always forever love you!!

This poem is dedicated to my Lil' Poppa, Dominic. I love you with all my heart little guy. And I want you to always know how special you are to me. You bring sunshine on my cloudy days and always with many ways make me smile. I'll always be here for you and your mom Cassandra, mijo. I love you and please always remember that. (Both of you.)

Message To the Young Men

As you all should know, my name is Carl Houle. I am writing to encourage all the young men out there to start to treat our women different. It's time to start loving the women and stop the hurt and neglect we at times do inflict. Let's be honest...guys without women, this world would be a cold, dark place. Without their smiles, laughs, beauty and guidance in life, we would truly be lost. Women bring life into this world. And since we can't make one I feel we need to appreciate these special girls that bring life into the world. Because to do such a feat takes courage, wisdom, care and love. What a precious thing to do. Guys, it's time to give back to the ladies and love them and care for them. "It's time to protect our women. And be real to our women. It's time to show them how much they mean to us truly..."

I encourage all of you that have a special girl in your life to open up to them. Share your dreams, goals, and what excites you. You will see when you do this she will too! And both of you can mature together and help each other to succeed in all those things. Love never fails. And remember guys that if you're locked up and you still have a girl by your side...you have a 1 in a million girl (so keep her).

Don't be afraid to tell her you love her. Don't be afraid to do sweet things for her in front of your friends. And don't ever put anybody above her. Only God can be. Remember your so-called homeboys and friends aren't going to be there forever. They will move on in life as all much do. That is just a part of life. But I really want all of you guys who are reading this to think about this: Your homeboys ain't going to pay your bills, your homeboys ain't going to grow old with you, your homeboys ain't going to wake up in the morning next to you, your homeboys ain't going to bring that special child in your life!! Think about that. and it's plain to see how special a woman truly is to you. Love is not a game. So don't act like it is, guys. "It takes a real man to truly love a woman!"

In life I have grown to realize this and I hope and pray all you youngsters do too. I know how some of you feel and in some relationships some of you have been hurt. I want to say that not all

women are the same. Just like all men are not the same. So don't ever give up on love. Don't look for love, let love find you. And when it does, take it slow so you don't ruin a good thing.

My woman, Cassandra M., I love you with all my heart. And I want the whole entire world to know how much you mean to me. You are such an incredible woman. From your beauty, to your smile, to the love inside your heart is truly everything I cherish. I want everyone who reads this magazine to know she is my queen and my world. Our Lil' Poppa Dominic M. is the most important guy in my world. I am proud to walk this Earth with them and God willing even the next. God knows my heart belongs to them, my queen and my prince.

Guys when is the last time you expressed how much you love your kids or woman?? I encourage you to do so. And when you do, truly open up and allow it to come from your heart. Let's give a handclap for our women in this world. Let's start to show appreciation for how they still love us even when we can be cranky or make mistakes. It's time we show them truly how much they mean to us.

To all the women in this world, I want to thank you for bringing sunshine into this life. And I want to say to truly always remember how special you are. Your beauty is only skin deep, what matters is what's in your heart. Allow that to guide you through all you do.

Ladies again on behalf of all the men in this world I send my respects and thank you. To my Queen Cassandra give Lil' Poppa a kiss for me and remember that I will forever love you and our little guy with all my heart, mind, soul and strength. I love you Cass. You two are my angels and I'm honored to have you both in my life.

Lastly, but never the least....guys I leave you with this. This was said by a very wise man and when you think about it wherever you are as you hold this Beat, I pray and hope that it touches your heart!

"All that matters at the end of our lives is that we were loved and have also love that's what's important. Until pen and paper meet again to all my young brothers and sisters remember I love you and I'm here for you. Allow your heart to guide you as you change your lives. You can do it...just listen to your hearts.

Dear The Beat Within

Thanks for sending me an issue if possible can you send me some more. Also I'm a rapper from Sacramento, CA and me being 31 years old I feel the need to share something with all the youngsters. So if possible can you print this?

•SLUMZ•

Our next writer is writing to us from a Correctional Facility in Elk Grove, Ca. Mike Fox aka Slumz comes through with just more than just your average slick rhymed rap. Even though his rhymes do hit on point like the head of a hammer on a nail, he does a good job nailing down a very strong message. So peep out Slumz piece as he gives you a piece of his mind, heart and soul.

On My Own

I'm used to doing time on my own
If life were a mountain I'd have to climb it alone
I'm like that mutt at the pound
They're trying to find me a home
But I'm a diamond in the ruff
That's shining real strong
I'm so tired of never making it
But always coming close
I got a chance so I'm taking it
Cause if I don't I'll never know
If I can be that man
I was born and bred to be
I am encouraged cause I was nourished
By the game that was fed to me
Sit back little homey
Peep how this stuff goes down
If life was a circus
Then they're always changing clowns
The same scheme and the routine

Is scripted to a tee
And the crowd that's laughing
Them laughing ain't no different than you and me
Cause you all play a part on this chessboard
Call our lives
Move wrong and you stuck
So you better move it right
If you loose set them up and begin to play again
And know that this game is always played to win
A loss may come in fact it's to be expected
He's a soldier a warrior way more than just a pawn
DEFEAT GIVES HIM STRENGTH
THAT'S NEEDED TO CARRY ON
He's always pushing and striving
One day he'll be a king
Over the bishops and the rooks
By his side he'll have that queen
For me ya' see ain't quite made it that far
But I'm here so it's clear that
I got a lot of fight left in my heart.

Public Execution

Why do you feel the need to degrade a female or an individual who is weaker than you? Why is it that you want respect, however fail to give it? Why is it you feel the system and society is against you?

First, I see so many brothers role play in the public's eyes, wanting their peers to accept them as a figure. I'm about to bring it raw and uncut.

For those of you with they typical chip on your shoulders, with unlaced shoes and your sweat-suit that's lose, trip, it's your (public execution) your standing in. You want to be treated as a man, however your actions are childish. You speak bad on your so-called girl, you bet on her, you cheat on her, you make her believe she's the one in the wrong and she deserves all she has coming to her. Everyone sees you're a coward, most of all your reflection tells you best. Trip, it's your public execution you're standing in.

Tiny, don't want to fight, he just wants to go to work, he's living a real life with his kids and wife, so you and your boys give it to him one night, you rob him and leave him for dead. You know what though, Tiny lived. He didn't tell, but remembered every face.

Night and day Tiny and his family prayed for the men who left him for dead. They prayed for change and for the Lord to forgive all of them. They prayed for happiness in life.

Tiny, is the ideal man, the weak who fall victim in a situation where his life was spared. He didn't resent and he even showed his family that he must forgive to live. A man of strength will prosper, when he lives for the weak and turns on the light in matters that was driven in complete darkness, now your left with a spirit of judgment.

Everything we do is seen whether if it is by someone else or your own eye. As a baby we crawl to gain balance, we stand before we walk. So we struggle as an infant, it's a

struggle we overcome naturally. So when we face everyday people and life events we must face everything with a form of respect. If you fail to give respect more then likely it'll be hard for others to give it in return. I use the infant as an illustration to show everything starts with you and how you want it. If you don't like a feeling of rejection then treat others how you would like to be treated. Give respect and in return one will get respect!

Trip, it's your public execution your standing in.

I remember growing up and being defiant. I turned my life into obstacles. I blamed the system and found many excuses of why I was incarcerated. I felt it was society that was turning me into the young menace I was. It was as if they would send a young youth away, and throw away the key and forget we existed.

Well Beaters I'm here to inform you I stood in the middle, I can't justify my wrongs. I will tell you I was wrong about the system and society. I was everything you don't want to be, I'm still caught up in the system, I turned my life into a struggle that I'm finally facing, cause I didn't want to listen.

Trip, my life has been a public execution, now I'm standing up against it by striving for betterment.

Stand up for change, don't leave your life out to hang for the public execution. Remember you're the mirror image to those who love you and look up to you. A brother, sister, family member, or your homey, what you do and how you act can cause a chain reaction and everyone turns into a public exaction.

MR. DANIELS

Knowledge

It must be attained in order for you to prevail and move forward. Since we all up under the law's of the land, (America), regardless of how you look at things, you must know and understand the laws, your rights as a human being and figure out how to use these laws/rights effectively. Because if not, you will continue to be played for the fool.

Violent behavior is expected out of us. Who do you think your oppressor trains for your outburst? The actions we think are slick they have already practice for. But to think, plan, study and articulate in the language of law is not expected. For most of us convicts we will never see the inside of a university if we continue down this path so you must use this time as your college.

The time will come for us to be released and you must put your thoughts, hopes, aspiration and dreams into play. Turn it into actions. Because your actions speaks louder than words. Network with others, learn from your mistakes and those of your friends. Take no one for granted. A dummy can be your teacher because you will learn from him what not to do.

Ask the people who you know that are wealthy how

Mr. Daniels is an OG when it comes to feeding us knowledge. Sending us his latest submission from the California Corrections Institute in Tehachapi, CA. Mr. Daniels offers some powerful writing. This is some real talk from real people that has done all the negative things y'all can think of and telling you what the outcome is. For real, no joke, this is real life, with real people behind bars with some serious time, wishing they had another opportunity like most of y'all do. Lets give the floor to Mr. Daniels.... Knowledge is power!

much hard work it took to get there. Ask your big homies how much pain, frustration and chaos they went through to reach it. Neither avenue is easy. To really know what real money/power is, you must truly understand capitalism. The American way is to destroy anything in its way to succeed. Even if you don't agree with her policy you support it by paying taxes.

You can never be truly free with thoughts of revenge, material gains, or anything of that nature. Let the past be that and start your journey today. We must respect ourselves before anyone else will. The acceptance by press that we crave is only showing our own insecurity.

Stay focused and continue to push for what you truly want out of life. Be your own man and think for yourself. Because if you let any man think for you, you become his slave.

Sea of Pain

It's late and I'm out of focus.
I feel adrift at sea, lost in my backbreaking labor.
Then all at once it hit's me like a beacon in the night.
I'm in the middle of my rep, half way through my set.
That familiar feeling returns.
The pain it washes over me.
Wave after wave, my senses reel,
yeah, I could drop it all, walk away from this burden.
Instead, I grit my teeth, catch my breath and plow forward.
When the going gets tough, many head for safe harbor.
I don't, I welcome the pain, it keeps me honest, and it grounds
me. The sea is wild and rough.
Though the pain may come over you.
Never let it overcome you.

Our next writer has hit us with a tidal wave of information. But before we get into his article on "The Forgotten Children" he has a short piece titled "A Sea Of Pain," in which he describes his emotions as though he were on a sailboat. Jamal is a creative writer with knowledge to drop. As he slips us these writings through the barbed wire fences from California Correctional Institution in Tehachapi, CA, Jamal attacks a very important issue that plays a big role in the community. Social service work undeniably services people that are in need, but at the same time Jamal addresses its failures in their system including the foster care system. So listen up as Jamal breaks it down for all of us to understand it better.

I was never allowed to say goodbye to my parent or for them to ensure me that all would work out.

The Forgotten Children

It was the summer of 1990, when I was just a young child. I was five years old. Most people have a difficult time remembering what they were doing at such a young age. But not me. A negative or positive occurrence will become embedded in your memory for a lifetime.

This occurrence that I'm talking about is the public childcare system/social service agencies. Something I am well-versed in.

As a kid my family lived in a pretty big house. It had a front house and a back house. I lived in the back. The only problem was we lacked electricity in the house, so we were forced to shower and eat in the front house.

One day about 2:00 am, in the morning, social services and police came knocking on our door. Reportedly someone placed a phone call, saying that we were living in a less than safe environment. So as part of the solution all of the kids were taken into childcare custody, and our parents were held back by the police. That one night became the beginning of a long journey shared by many kids in my situation, moving from foster homes, group homes, to placements and finally back home. When my journey had ended I had been placed in twenty-eight different homes. This is my memory that will never escape me or others like me.

It is often said, that the children are the future, and without them, there wouldn't be any future. Yet as the years pass it seems more and more as if the children are being pushed aside and forgotten. Let's take the child care system for instance. Something I am well familiar with, due to my many years are being a ward of state.

After the passing and enactment of the countries "Welfare Bill," by an overwhelming vote by US Senators, ending the guaranteed assistance that was afforded to the poor economical families. With the passing of this new bill, it has become more and more difficult if not impossible for these families to provide for their kids. So with loss of this money, families are forced to develop other means of supporting their families. Some have turned to illegal means to achieve their obligation to their children, by doing so risking imprisonment, leaving family's torn apart by the actions of social services. So now the inner cities poor not only have the lack of jobs, social and economical hurdles to overcome, they now have the fear of losing their children, if they cannot adequately care for them.

According to several "child care" interest groups an estimated 3 million children who were reported to these child protection agencies; most were said to be suffering from abuse, but defined it as "physical abuse" by an adult causing scaring, bruising, welts, bleeding and broken bones or any kind of sexual abuse. Out of the more than 3 million reported, nearly 2,000 resulted in death; approximately half a million kids are in foster care or similar housing, an increase of 250,000 since 1986.

Now it's 2006 and the number is up to over 600,000. The most alarming fact is foster care children suffer posttraumatic stress disorder two times more than war veterans. Ten percent have committed suicide or attempted to an estimated 14 kids live in poverty and about 100,000 of them are homeless.

My opinions are not to denote a completely view of the social

service system, but anyone who has experienced the negative effects of the country child care system would have to all agree that a change must occur. In order to remedy the many pitfalls connected with the childcare system, if congress do not address the way social service remove kids from their homes, and how they place them in less then subnormal environments; then this problem will get even worst. To remove kids from what they consider normal, such as the love of parents, siblings and a good school environment can have emotional, social and mental effects. That will be difficult, if not impossible for the child to overcome.

I was never allowed to say goodbye to my parent or for them to ensure me that all would work out. I was like most kids snatched in the dead of night from the loving care of my family. The families that these kids are placed with have had the chance to meet with these kids, so as to allow these kids to form some type of connection with. By failing to do this, kids have no one to love them. They are disobedient, angry and stressed out, forcing the child to grow up in such a negative environment will lead the child to think of this as normal. It is a well-known fact that kids who lack the love and support of a caring family, will most likely develop, violent and destructive behavior, that can take it's toll on society and the child's future.

Another one of the many pitfalls of social service is, they take kids from their family without too much of an investigation. It is my opinion that if the only problem with a child's home life is financial security, then why not provide the family with means of providing the necessary financial support, instead of sending the child off to a less then loving environment, where the child will feel neglected and unloved. So why do social service opt for the negative over the positive? The problem can be found in the lack of funds, to have more caseworkers to elevate the heavy caseloads that social workers are already have a current burden with. This may result in a less than adequate monitoring system and stressed out caseworkers, who often place them in a less then safe environment and also without the needed funds.

No family and childcare support programs are being created that will provide the assistance needed to these families, that will help them to deal with the problems that create a need for such childcare systems. I have developed three solutions in dealing with the problems that plagues our childcare system.

1.) Mediators should be hired to act as intermediary advocates for the children and childcare system. This will help transmit the child's desire for the type of living environment they wish to live in.

2.) In order to create safe, loving, and caring homes for children, you must first begin with restructuring the system so as to hire more experienced social workers that have the ability to communicate with the kids and understand them? Then you must create family support programs to help alleviate the stress on foster care.

3.) You must then create motivational, self-help, psychological and preparedness programs that will help facilitate that child's insertion in society.

Me

I am somebody
 I was nobody
 I hope to succeed
 I fear none, but respect all
 I love myself and family
 I dream to live wealthy
 I wish my children
 Would become successful
 I laugh at dumb stuff
 I cry when I'm sad
 But when the tears dry, life goes on
 I was a follower
 I am a leader.

-Delonte

We'd like to welcome back the young writers who write for The Free Minds Book Club and Writing Workshop in Washington D.C. Jail. Since November 2002, Free Minds Book Club & Writing Workshop have been introducing youth being charged as adults at the D.C. Jail to the life-changing power of books and creative writing. These poems have been published in their own publication and we, The Beat, have the privilege and honor to re-publish them in our weekly.

I Am Me

I am me
 A person who shows kindness & love
 Just like a similar one
 Who watches us from above?
 A person dedicated to his community
 That is in great need
 But I'll be there to help rebuild it
 Like a fully blossomed flower from a small seed
 I am me
 A son of a mother who works overtime
 To provide for her kids at home
 Me & those crazy lil' sisters of mine
 She shows dedication to her work
 Where she makes \$13.90 an hour
 But at least it helps us survive
 And keeps the milk from going sour
 I am me
 An uncle to a new baby girl
 Who was brought by my brother?
 Into this cruel & unfair world

I have yet to hold her, kiss her
 And tell her I love her
 But that'll change
 Once I'm free from this "cage"
 Soon I am ME
 A brother to seven
 Jose, Jimmy, David, Brittney, Jennifer
 And my close my friends Lugo and Tas
 Who are all bound to go heaven?
 They keep my head up And put a big smile on my face
 But I'll soon rejoin them After I beat this long, excruciating case
 I am me
 A strong and proud Latino Who has a large number of friends?
 And a small deal of foes I'm a true Salvadorian And wear my colors with pride
 Along with other Latinos Who stand by me, side by side?
 I am me
 A person ready to be set free
 Back into my life And back into society.

-William

A Breath Away from a Bullet

My Grandmother always told me
 I was a breath away from a bullet
 'Cause of the life style I lived
 Somebody would squeeze the trigger on me
 Or I'd be the one that'd pull it
 And become incarcerated or dead
 Before 21 like statistics said
 But do you think that stopped me
 From keeping Glocks and 50 rocks under my bed?
 I had bad dreams of bullets flyin' past my head
 Some dreams of me in a hospital bed
 But my grandmother said she had nightmares
 Of police tellin' her I was dead
 I'm thinking in my head, "Grandma, it's gonna be alright!
 So go to sleep without worrying, I'll make it home tonight!"
 'Cause I got this thing on my hip
 That keeps me safe during the day and night
 I gotta be the neighborhood pharmacist
 So our family can eat right
 I remember this old head told me
 "If you live by the gun, you'll die by the bullet."
 But I told him, "Not me,
 Cause I'ma be the first one to pull it."
 But little did I know
 This crazy life had me a breath away from a bullet!

-Davon

Every Step I Take

Every minute I have
 I ask myself
 Is it my last?
 I don't know
 So I live like I'm not coming back
 Do everything that I can
 To have fun
 Because I don't want my last step
 And my last minute
 To be sad
 I want people to say
 He did a lot
 And he had fun.

-Tyree

Parts of My Life

People say when you come to jail you do a lot of thinking
 I feel like one of those people up to this day
 I have lost two of my friends while I was in here
 I have been shot at
 So much that I thought that it was never going to stop
 I was within 2 inches
 Of getting half of my body hit by a speeding car going about 80 mph
 One day a man came up to me and my friend
 And killed him in front of my face
 And told me to walk
 Once a car came up my street shooting
 When my little sister, and my mother was outside
 Up to this day I look back on them things
 But I don't let it get to me
 So that it makes me want to go and do something to somebody
 I look back at the good things that went on in my life
 And it feels like my life was planned this way
 And that's why I call this "Parts of My Life."

-Sergio

Senseless Shootings

People who senselessly shoot other people are nothing but SCUM
 They have no value for their own life
 And no respect for others
 They belong in jail
 Because the only time a person should use a gun
 Is when their own life is threatened or their families
 My message to those who are ready to shoot
 When you take a life
 You lose your own
 So if you can't do the time
 DON'T COMMIT THE CRIME
 Message delivered.

The Conclusion

I'm now maxing out in juvy
 I did a lot of thinking while I was here
 I missed my grandmother so much
 She went in to hospital and I couldn't be by her side
 You see my grandmother raised me
 So I ain't really feeling this
 While I was here, I got my G.E.D.
 And I am now making some concrete discharge plans
 Because IF YOU FAIL TO PLAN YOU PLAN TO FAIL
 So something good came of this LESSON LEARNED
 Now how can I prove to myself, that I learned my lesson?
 By not respecting the same things that got me here.

Gun Charges

Had someone told me even
 Possession of a gun could get me
 Five to ten years in jail
 I might have thought before I
 Purchased it

 But like a fool
 I bought something that could only get me
 In some serious trouble

 Imagine if I would have actually shot someone
 I'd be doing 25 years to life
 I'd be almost fifty when I got out

 It's because of my thug mentality
 That being in juvy have made life a reality

 So it's a must I weigh my choices
 Because the thought of being here for years here
 Made me do some serious thinking

 When I get out of jail

If I return to any form of criminal behavior
 I know I might as well just knock on the jail door
 And say let me in

'Cause some people
 Are STUCK ON STUPID
 They get out, and are so dumb
 They think they won't get caught again,
 And when they do, the judge then decides
 How long they have to stay.

Our next writer is a talented young man sending us his pieces from a youth correctional facility in Goochland, Virginia. He sends us a few pieces that let's us know what he's really thinking. It shows us how he was thinking before and after his actions and the consequences he's facing from them. We all make mistakes and sometime it takes for us to experience it first hand to learn from it. Some times we can learn them through other people. Either way we bring to you Hasson to tell you a bit of what he thinks, and hopefully y'all can learn from his experience.

One on One

I just had to have a gun
 I went and bought it and then I kept it hidden
 Because deep down within, I knew it was forbidden
 I never even tried myself not to abuse it
 And when a situation arose
 I was anxious to use it
 I didn't think about the consequences of my actions
 Nor did I think about the jail time, or all the things I now
 can't do
 Now the question I must ask myself is
 WAS IT WORTH IT?

What Will I Do When I Get Out

Everyday I think about what I want to do when I get out.
 I'll be on probation, with time hanging over my head, so
 I know I won't do anything that will result to me getting
 violated or arrested again.
 Then I'll be 18, and no more juvy, and jail in Virginia.
 So I am making discharge plans now. I'm going to learn a
 trade, so I can get good pay, 'cause jail just ain't the place
 to be.

Lesson Learned

The best thing that came of me being confined
 I had nothing but time, to search through my own mind
 Naturally I can't wait to get out
 But most importantly I will conduct myself with the
 utmost respect for my freedom
 In everything that I do
 I will think about, number one
 What do I have to gain?
 Number two, what do I have to lose?
 For sure being incarcerated has taught me to value my
 freedom
 To appreciate the simple things to be grateful
 Yeah I made some wrong decisions
 But what the devil meant for evil, God meant for good
 Cause I learned a valuable lesson
 How precious life really is.

The Goal in Life

I want to live by the code of the streets
 Gold chains and the latest sneakers on my feet
 Because my goal in life is to be a gangsta'
 So my life will probably be set
 Because gold chains ain't really what's being in jail
 But that's where I'm destined to be.
 Cause I'm blind
 And choose not to see.

Learn

Lack of knowledge or intelligence, we are all ignorant to some things. So don't freak out. I was ignorant to why people argue out of their cells and in the cages on the yard. I searched for the answer and I think I found it in the bible. The bible says to love thy neighbor. Love includes understanding, compassion, and kindness. So I try to understand this anger. People miss their family so they are sad. They want coffee and food, and they don't have it so they are frustrated and single celled, we're all lonely.

Here's a side note. It's a scientific fact that isolation takes its toll on your sanity and we're all single celled in the psych services unit where we're supposed to be getting psychological rehabilitation. Back to the subject, people have all these mixed emotions. What does that bring? Stress right? It brings stress and stress makes you panic. When you panic you often make bad decisions and lose control, lash out. Well what caused all these emotions and stress? What it all comes down is sin, temptation and Satan.

Who built prison? Why did they do it? I don't know, but it seems to be a form of punishment. So are you going to let it defeat you? The governing authorities were appointed by God. Why would God do that? I would have to say to discipline us. Some of us get short 5-year sentences and learn the rule of society and comply, discipline, complete. Some of us get a life sentence so we figure. Wow! God did like what I was doing. That's my punishment for what I did. Not just what I was caught for.

You see God knows all your thoughts. Why does God discipline us? Because he wants us to learn and benefit from our lessons and correct our wrongs. That's love, wisdom and benefits, a gift that lasts forever. So should we be mad at God for discipline? Not at all for it was Satan's temptation and our free will that was poorly activated. So we should be mad at Satan for God is the father and he must discipline his children.

So all these people arguing and cussing each other out getting in everyone's business. They are entertaining Satan and saddening God. Remember I said everybody has their own issues? You don't know what dudes going through. You don't even know if he cares what you think. Do you ever care what he thinks? You don't know what your words will do to that person. So if you don't know what you doing what's the point?

If you really want to piss someone off you have to understand them. I bet if dudes understood the people they argue with they wouldn't say what they do. So I try to understand people and all I know about some people is they live in the bathroom, they try to sleep in it and they are angry with issues. So why would I poke a stick at someone who is suffering? When you're surrounded by angry people there's tension and stress. I figure I'll help myself by helping someone else. Love thy neighbor as yourself, so says the Lord. You got to think. Who are you following? Who are you listening to? Where are you heading? And where are you at? You need to investigate that's what I find.

I ask questions and obtain information, but not everybody's right. Everybody has an opinion, I used to mediate and just sit there and breath. It calmed me down and allowed me to think. So basically I organized my thoughts to what I thought was the best. The key word is in the name of love and peace you can read the Bible and find out how. Some call it the word because it's God giving you the answers, its no secret.

It tells you God will not tempt you and he will reward you, when you do the right thing. The devil will tempt you and influence you to reap love from God in the form of punishment. So don't be mad at your neighbor be mad at Satan it's his fault.

Our next writer has been putting it down consistently for the past several weeks. This week Jonathan Miller offers a lot of strong advice and powerful knowledge. He definitely comes through with a powerful piece that directs it at a homie he deeply cares about. Not a specific homie, but a homie, anyone of those homies that he has got bunked with. Because a real homie will tell you he don't ever want to see you again, and never want to see you come back to jail. A real homie would rather have you spend time with your family then be in the Pen. A real homie will give you some positive advice, and not put you in a situation where you might be denied your freedom for life. We thank Jonathan for his words of wisdom. He writes us from a Correctional Facility in Represa, CA.



Embrace

They said "right thought" then came the word
 They suggested, "think," I decided to learn
 Homies we're with you
 Whatever where going through
 We're going through it too
 I used to punch the walls
 Disturbed my neighbor
 Bruised and bloody knuckles, they healed later
 I've done obscene things and lost my mind
 I know it's frustrating what they call "doing time"
 I know your mad and angry, it comes with the turf
 I'm here for you brother for whatever it's worth
 Welcome to prison, frustrating, boring, lame
 You're now a number address by your last name
 Daydreaming of females we won't be dating
 I wouldn't waste my time; they're not worth chasing
 Our fantasy far fetched, Arnold Schwarzenegger
 The laws ain't changing now, maybe later
 Dudes talking about everything they love and yo' momma
 Dissin' each other, why don't you pray for Obama?
 There's hope still just don't let go
 It ain't about what you think, it's about what you know
 There's only one way for eternal survival
 Find out about it in the Holy Bible.

Dear Homey

I don't want to put you up on criminal game because I don't condone criminal ways. But I will give you a few hard facts: And that is you get time for doing what you're thinking of. I don't think you'd get away with it. Not here. A hard fact to accept would be your mother's sorrow. If you want to hurt yourself like that, think what hurting yourself consists of. Hurting your mom, hurting your sister. They miss you and worry about you when you're here. Go home. Don't fall for the trap. I love you homey. I don't want you to stay here. Not because I don't like your company, I do. I enjoy talking to you. You trip me out. I love that, but don't give me a mad trip bro. You love me too I know. I sense that from you, but I would think less of you if you chose me over family.

If that dude you're mad at had a heart attack and died right now it wouldn't affect your family. Your momma didn't raise him. I bet it would affect her and your family if you tried to stop his heart yourself and you got more time. I bet she would be real upset. Why? Because she wants to spend time with you and she, instead, will be missing you. You want to deprive your mom's company and pass on her cooking to spend some time with me and these other dudes?

What do you think it's like for your mom to get a letter from her son while he's in prison? I bet your momma can't wait to see the dude. Would it be easier to feel hatred from your mother? Then you wouldn't feel bad for hurting her. Instead you have a mother that loves you. It makes it harder. Dudes talk about, "yo' momma this, yo' momma that." I don't mean to hurt your feelings but "yo' momma love you homey" It's a cold reality that she loves you and you're causing her pain. Don't get mad when people talk crazy. Don't hurt your mom by hanging out with me. Don't stay longer. Let those things that don't matter slide. Prove what to who? And get what out of it?

Some people are set in their ways and they believe what they believe. Some people been around the brain washing politics? The messages of hate? Where do these things get you? You want to partake in that stuff you won't be happy. You'll feel self-hatred when you catch more time. Look for the good side in people and build on that. What your talking about doing is serious, but the cause of it is really nothing serious. Its partially because your stressed out and that causes you to receive vibes differently and it adds tension strains to be contributed to your decision making processes.

You believe in demons and angels because you know. All that black magic and witchcraft, it all works but what does it get you? What good is having the world for 80 years if you die and get thrown in a lake of fire? I imagine that to be the worst than lava from a volcano. Demons don't like you bro. If you take anything I said to heart take that. I love you homey. I got nothing but love for you, but I don't want to hang with you for the rest of my life. The rest of my life will be in prison. Don't stay. Go.

Prison is unfortunate to every prisoner. Explaining that in depth would involve everyone's past and how they lived free. Don't be a victim of prison. Don't be a product of the pen. People come get brain washed. You don't really want to hurt this guy. You don't really care what he said. Both Satan and Jesus Christ have things to offer when you learn the truths surrounding these things. It will help understand. Dear homey I will pray for you. With all due respects.

Dear Beat

I only got 3 pieces of paper. I'm still reading the last issue I got. I barely started it, but from the last one I notice the youngsters are tight. By this I mean they're cool, young and stylish.

What I've been seeing around here is what I said in the piece I sent. I got to keep it short because of supplies. I'll be fat in a minute I get by. Whatever the Lord wills.

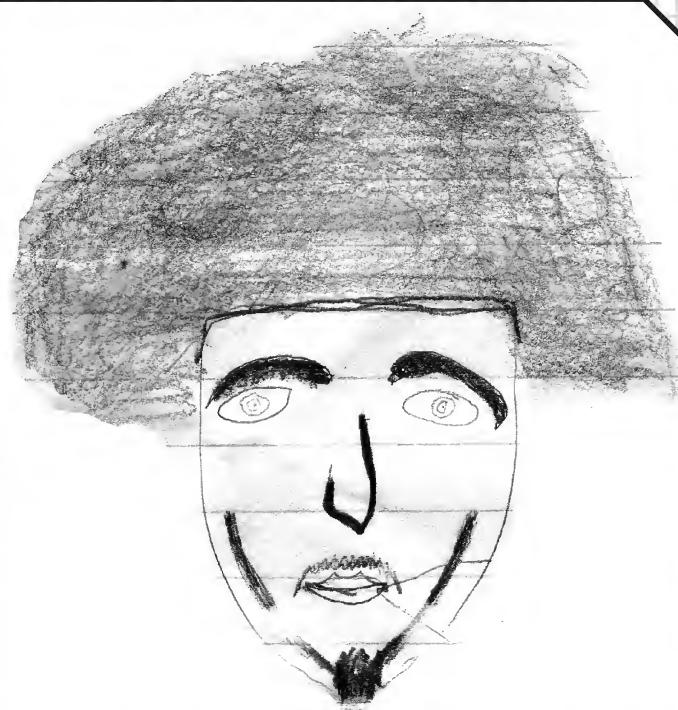
I used to pray to Jesus all the time but I wasn't living right so I opened the Bible and I saw why I was so miserable and learned a lot like. I know I always write about this stuff, but it's necessary. I was carrying my shame. I was trying to impress men. That sounds gay. Not like that. Too short said in a song running around a fool living up to his rep. I got a lot of names. I don't like half of them anymore. Who gave me those names? I was serving them. I held them high in regards. I went out of my way to impress them.

When you read the last sentence did the word "foolishness" appear in your thought? It was embarrassing to write. God has so much more to offer then the temptation of Satan. That's crack like. It last a little while, then you suffer and it cost a lot. I've done so many stupid things but I'm not ashamed anymore. I'm not trying to impress man or every woman. I live for God. I care what God thinks. I care what he knows. God is my authority.

I'm surrounded by workers, prisoners, Angels and the Holy Spirit. We think we are so clever obtaining money and drugs illegally. I thought like that, but living for God I get satisfaction and understanding. I'm not trying to push religion on you but I suggest to any one that doesn't know to learn about God.

I'll leave with that. Everyone is curious and has questions. The answers are in the Bible, word up. I'm out.

With Respects...



As a baby we crawl to gain balance, we stand before we walk. So we struggle as an infant, it's a struggle we overcome naturally. So when we face everyday people and life events we must face everything with a form of respect. If you fail to give respect more then likely it'll be hard for others to give it in return. I use the infant as an illustration to show everything starts with you and how you want it. If you don't like a feeling of rejection then treat others how you would like to be treated. Give respect and in return one will get respect.

read the rest of Anthony Navarez's BWO piece on page 50

